

E I G H T
S E R M O N S,
U P O N
P R A C T I C A L S U B J E C T S,

P R E A C H E D A T T H E
N E W C H U R C H I N L A N G E I T H O,
S O U T H W A L E S;

B Y T H E
R e v. M r. D A N I E L R O W L A N D;

A N D N O W
A t t e m p t e d t o b e T r a n s l a t e d f r o m t h e
O r i g i n a l B R I T I S H,

*Si Christum discis, nihil est si cætera nescis;
Si Christum nescis, nihil est si cætera discis.*

L O N D O N:

P R I N T E D f o r t h e E D I T O R; (T H O M A S D A V I E S, n e a r
H a v e r f o r d w e s t, S o u t h W a l e s) b y T H O M A S P A R K E R,
J e r w i n S t r e e t; a n d S o l d b y M r. W A T T S, B o o k s e l -
l e r; M r. J O N E S, N o. 8, E y r e - S t r e e t, C o l d B a t h
F i e l d s; a t t h e T A B E R N A C L E H O U S E, U p p e r M o o r -
F i e l d s; a n d i n m o s t T o w n s i n E n g l a n d a n d W a l e s.

E. I. O. H. T.

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T O T H E
R E A D E R.

TH E following Sermons are the productions of an eminent Clergyman in the Principality of Wales, who hath been, for near Forty Years, a zealous and an indefatigable labourer in the Lord's vineyard. He is still alive, and, notwithstanding his advanced age, as active as ever. Unembarrassed with worldly cares, and almost unconnected with the world, he lives above it, and is a striking emblem of primitive simplicity. His manner of life brings the mind many centuries back, and sets it down in the apostolic age. Such undissembled piety, and such unaffected integrity, are not the general characteristics of latter days. Wholly devoted to his Master's work, and treading in his steps, "he goes about continually doing good." His audiences are very large wherever he preaches, and the stated number of Communicants, at the monthly Sacraments in his own church, is seldom less than two thousand, and sometimes more than four thousand. His discourses are plain, and practical. He doth not affect a display of great learning, and deep reading; but his whole aim is to speak to the heart, and in plain language. He doth not want to make his people profound philosophers, but sound believers. For though philosophy may be useful and proper in its place, yet he knows that it will never bring the soul to heaven. Hence he draws all his arguments from the sacred oracles, not only as they are best adapted to the capacities of his hearers, but as they contain the only method of salvation for fallen, guilty, and helpless sinners. Knowing the wretched state that man is in by nature, he tries to arouse him to a sense of his danger by the thunders of the law, and the lightnings of Sinai. Deeply acquainted

TO THE READER.

ted with the gospel scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, he publishes the glad tidings with all the fervour and affection of one, who experimentally knows their inestimable worth. He sometimes adds tears to his intreaties, when, after he hath displayed the unsearchable riches of Christ, he is inviting the miserable, the poor, and the naked to come and partake of them. Yet being convinced, that no human persuasion can prevail with them to accept of a free and plenteous redemption, he with earnest supplication recommends them to the Spirit of grace, and to the efficacious influences of his power. And oh! in what rapturous and elevated strains doth he often perform this part of his office! how are the congregations melted, borne down, and overcome, while the sweet and precious accents drop from his tongue! having learned by happy experience, that faith is a vital principle, wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, he not only inculcates universal holiness in heart and life, as an evidence of its being a genuine faith; but insists upon it as an indispensable meetness for communion with God both in time and eternity.

These various subjects he illustrates by pertinent scriptural allusions, and by similes borrowed from those objects, which happen to be nearest at hand. This too he hath learned from the example of his blessed Master, who grounded most of his parables on some object, that presented itself to the eyes of his auditory. And though some of our Author's illustrations may be counted low by the squeamish critic, and the flippant wit; yet if they understood his vernacular language, and could hear him pouring them out with his grave, and manly eloquence, which, like an irresistible torrent, carries all before it, they would soon alter their opinion; and if they could not, with Saul, when he was admitted among the prophets, catch his spirit, they would learn not to blaspheme. Blessed with these endowments as he is, can it be wondered that he is a successful preacher? accompanied as the word in his mouth is, with uncommon energy from above, can it be thought incredible that so many thousand souls should, under his ministry, be "brought from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God?" But here it will perhaps be asked
" why

TO THE READER.

—“ why were these sermons translated into English ? To this it may be replied, that the translation was undertaken, not only with the approbation of many respectable persons, as the numerous list of subscribers testifies, who were desirous to hear Mr. Rowland, in their own tongue, “ speaking the wonderful works of God ;” but also that those, who do not understand the Welsh language, and may be prejudiced against the truth from the opinion of others, may examine for themselves, and judge whether those doctrines, which are branded as unfriendly to good works, may not be enforced in a practical manner, and be productive of the strictest and most refined morality ; or, whether it be not their direct tendency to render those, in whose hearts they actually prevail, dutiful, and obedient to God their Saviour—peaceable, and useful members to commonwealth—sober, frugal, and exemplary in their own persons, and families ; or, an ornament to society in their religious, civil, and their relative capacities. Besides ; as the Methodists in Wales have been represented as a set of ignorant, hot-headed Enthusiasts, the public may now form some judgment of their understanding, as well as of their principles, from the writings of one, who hath presided among them for such a length of time, with unblemished reputation, and may be supposed from the nature of his connexions, to express the sentiments of the whole fraternity. With respect to the translation itself, little can be said of it, but that it stands in need of much candour, and indulgence. The idioms of the two languages are so different, that it was almost impossible to express with any tolerable ease, and clearness in the one, what is obvious and elegant in the other, And the original is so concise and laconic, that it cannot be transfused through the translator’s alembic without losing much of its salt, and having a great deal of its spirit evaporated.

Care however hath been taken in this translation, to accomodate the terms to an English ear, as nearly as could be, without departing too far from the original : but with what success must be determined by those who are competent judges. Such as it is, it is now commended to God, and the power of his grace. If his blessing

TO THE READER.

bleſſing ſhall attend it, *that* will ſupply all its defects. May it be his gracious pleaſure to make this humble attempt ſubſervient to the beſt intereſts of mankind! May theſe ſermons be as much honoured with his preſence in their new, as in their native dreſs! May he own them in the cloſet, as he owned them in the church! and may their dear and valuable author long continue a public benefit to the world by his labours in the pulpit, and his writings from the preſs! May his life and uſefulneſs be extended to a ſtill very diſtant period! and when this father, in our Iſrael, ſhall be called to his bleſſed and eternal home; may ſome portion of his mantle deſcend upon his ſucceſſors, that they may ſupply his place and ſtation, with equal zeal for the Redeemer's glory, and the good of immortal ſouls, if not with equal abilities! Theſe are the earneſt prayers of, candid Reader, thy ſincere well wiſher, for Jeſus's ſake,

April 18,
1774.

The Tranſlator.

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THE Editor returns his grateful thanks to the Author who generously gave him the copy, and to those who subscribed so chearfully for the same, so that, between the Editions in Welsh and English, about Eight Thousand will be disposed of in a short time.—I have endeavoured carefully to inspect the press—but claim no perfection; whatever might drop wrong, you may lay it to my charge—the Author being far distant from London, could not see any of it when in the press. According to my proposals I have printed the names of those who subscribed for six books and upwards that came to my hands—I am under great obligations to the Rector of Estcourt, who bore the greatest hand in the translation, and others who assisted—the Rev. E. Owen got me several hundred subscribers, and others, whose names are printed, exceeded my most sanguine expectations—may the Lord make the ensuing Sermons useful to many souls, and reward you all for your loving assistance, to your most obedient servant,

T. DAVIES.

The First Sermon was published Ten years ago, and met with great reception, it has lately been enlarged by the Author, and Sermon the Fifth was preached by him in the early part of his ministry, which is near Forty years ago.

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S E R M O N I.

The Redeemer's Voice.

Revelations iii. 20. *Behold! I stand at the door and knock.*

BEHOLD is the first word in the text, and none of the least in signification. It stands there as a star, or index to point out to us the weighty and important matter, that is contained in the subsequent sentence.

Indeed this word hath every where an eminent station in the sacred scriptures; and is generally used for such purposes as these: viz. to awaken our faith—"behold! a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;" Isaiah vii. 14. To arouse our hopes and expectations—"behold! I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give unto every man according as his work shall be;" Rev. xxii. 12. To excite our love—"behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should

B

be called the sons of God:" 1 John iii. 1. to alarm our fear—" behold! he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him:" Rev. i. 7. to stir up our joy—" behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people:" Luke ii. 10. to enliven our gratitude—" behold! bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord:" Psalm cxxxiv. 1. to move our compassion—" behold! is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow:" Lam. i. 12. and to engage our attention to some momentous truth, that we may observe its various excellencies, as here in the text—" behold! I stand at the door and knock."

What amazing discovery do these few words, when they are duly considered, make! what an assemblage of wonders do they present to our view! Oh! who can without astonishment, as well as pleasing raptures, behold the God of all glory stooping to take notice of man, who is altogether vile! who can without awful surprize hear, that the holy God, who is perfectly free from the least taint of impurity, should condescend to enter into the heart of man, who is a mass of uncleanness, and to dwell in it as in his temple!

What infinite distance is here! yea what rueful quarrel! yea, what indignation! But O happy reconciliation! O blessed union! that God and man should be brought under the same roof, and to the same table. This is wonderful in our eyes: It is meet and right

right that the word *behold*, which is so copiously significant, should be prefixed in this place.

If this star stands over the door, we may be sure that Jesus is within. It is always an attendant on the noble and illustrious. The fruit of that paradise must not be hastily plucked off, to which this Cherub guards the way.

If *behold* be written upon the box, we may be sure that the ointment, which it contains, is very precious. So it is here : *behold* ushers in the greatest miracles that was ever exhibited in our world. Behold ! the great God bows his heavens, and comes down to the sons of men—not armed with thunder or cloathed with unapproachable majesty—not covered with thick darkness, as when he made his descent upon mount Sinai, before the children of Israel ; or, which would have been an attractive sight to every eye, accompanied with melody, as he used to come into the sanctuary, “ when the singers went before, the players on instruments followed after, and the damsels were among them, playing with timbrels.” Psalm lxxviii. 25.

But he comes ‘ sub forma pauperis,’ in the character of a beggar, who solicits alms for God’s sake. Though “ he could break to pieces the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder,” Psalm cvii. 16. —though he could with one blast of his breath, tear up the mountains from their roots, and burst open the

the very portals of hell; yet he doth not come to us demolishing our houses, and leveling them with the ground—but he humbly stands at our doors.

Behold, and admire the patience and humility of our incarnate God! he stands at the door. Every word teems with wonder, and almost surpasses belief. “I stand at the door and knock.” I—it would have been an amazing condescension if it had been only an angel—the guardian of some mighty monarch, or one of the holy prophets, or the least of the winged seraphs, who had stooped so low—but it is “I, the Prince of peace,” the King of glory, the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, who am the object of continual adoration to all the hosts above. *I stand*: I do not sit in a chair of state, or recline myself on an easy couch—but I stand to manifest my readiness to come in, and my patience in waiting for admission. *I stand at the door*. I do not solace myself in a commodious apartment with the enlivening warmth of the fire, or rest my weary limbs in a soft pavilion; but I stand at the door without cover or shelter, where the cold frost chills me, and the stormy winds beat upon me—“where my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” Canticles v. 2. I stand, and—not like the harlot in the proverbs, chap ix. 14—18. who spreads her lures for the unwary passenger—not like the sodomites at Lot’s door, who were ripe for any mischief—not with my hands

hands in my bosom, like the idle loiterers, who gaze about in the market place ; but I—*knock*. I make a direct application to the persons, whose salvation I seek. I knock not one stroke and away, like one who cares not whether he succeeds or not : but I stand and knock, that I may see whether they will open to me, and permit me to make them happy."

Lord ! what is man, yea the most exalted of men, that thou, the omnipotent God, " at whose presence the heavens drop, Psalm lxxviii. 8. and out of whose mouth proceed devouring flames"—Psalm xviii. 8. whose voice rends the rocks, and dismantles the waving forests, shouldest stand at our doors and knock ! O what miracles of grace are here ! how many golden veins are contained in this rich quarry ! Through thy help O Lord, I will dig for some of them, and bring them to light. And on the surface of the mine, the

First, that I find is the person—" I : " the *Second*, is his attitude—I " stand : " and the *Third*, is his employment—" and knock."

The glorious personage, who submits to stand at the door of our hard hearts, and knock, is no other than " the mighty God, Isaiah ix. 6. the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth," Isaiah xl. 28. the effulgence of whose glory is so bright, that the sun itself, in comparison with him, is but an orb of darkness. He is without a parallel. Neither all

the men upon earth nor all the shining myriads of glorified angels in heaven can, in any degree, equal him who is the great Messiah—the God-man.

View him in his conception. See him who is very God becoming very man—God of his Father, without a mother—man of his mother, without a father—the true Melchisedec. View him in his birth. He, who inhabiteth eternity, dwelleth for some months in the womb. He, who hath neither beginning nor end, condescends to be born in our world. The everlasting Father becomes an infant of days. The word is unable to speak. Wisdom itself knows not the difference between good and evil. He, who upholdeth all things by his power, is upholden himself in the arms of a woman. The invisible Jehovah is seen by poor shepherds. Luke ii. 15, 16, 17. He, who feeds every living creature, sucks the breast. David's Lord is called David's son. The Lord of all disdains not to be a servant to all.

In the beginning of the creation man was made in the image of God: but now behold! God appears in the form of a man, and is very man. This is the most astonishing miracle that was ever beheld. The sun was once stopped in its course, Joshua x. 13. and its shadow was turned back ten degrees: 2 Kings xx. 11. this was something very extraordinary; but it sinks into nothing, when compared with the descending of the sun of righteousness from
heaven

heaven to earth—from the Father's bosom to a virgin's womb. Moses saw the bush burned with fire, and yet not consumed: Exodus iii. 2. but behold! here is a mother who is yet a virgin. Aaron's dry rod budded and blossomed: here Jesse's dry root and withered stem hath bloomed and brought forth fruit. Isaiah xi. 1. Manna came out of the clouds: but Jesus came from the height of glory. Elijah was caught up into heaven: but behold! a greater than he voluntarily leaves the mansions of the blessed, and tabernacles in human flesh. Well therefore may we say with one of the ancient fathers—
 'I shall no longer wonder at the extent of the earth, the increase or decrease of the moon, or the boundless dimensions of the sky, through which unnumbered worlds revolve: but I will wonder, and adore, to see God in the womb, and the Almighty in a cradle.' Doubtless, this is an astonishing event, and as singular as well as a just cause of rejoicing. Rejoice old father Adam! for thy wife Eve hath brought forth the promised seed, who shall bruise the serpent's head. Rejoice Abraham, thou venerable patriarch! for the day is arrived, 'which thou didst earnestly desire to see.' John viii. 56. Rejoice ye holy prophets! for your prophecies have been fulfilled. Luke i. 70. Rejoice ye men! for the son of God was made man. Gal. iv. 4. Rejoice ye women! for a woman is become a mother of God. Luke i. 43. Rejoice

joyce ye virgins ! for a “ virgin hath conceived and brought forth a son.” Isaiah vii. 14. Rejoice ye young men ! “ for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” Isaiah ix. 6. Rejoice ye, who sit in darkness ! for “ the sun of righteousness is risen.” Mal. iv. 2. Rejoice ye hungry ! for the “ bread of life is come down from heaven.” John vi. 41. Rejoice ye sick, and wounded ! for the physician is come to heal all your diseases, and to remove all your pains. Matt. ix. 12. And O ye sinners, ye chief of sinners ! rejoice and be exceeding glad ; for a Saviour—a Saviour is born. Sing—O sing praises to God in the highest for his good will toward the vilest of men. Hear St. Chrysostom’s melodious strain upon this joyful occasion, and bear a part with him. “ O the height and depth of God’s mercy ! O the bowels of the love of Jesus ! A lovely plant thou art, O lovely Redeemer, of the heavenly paradise. What attractions could draw thee from thence ! What force could drive thee out of the palace of thy glory ! None but thyself—nothing but thine infinite love, and unparalleled goodness.” Here let us pause, and consider why, or for what end this great and good Being thus humbled himself, and stooped so low. Was it to increase his own happiness, or to make any addition to the lustre of his sovereign authority.—No, but it was to do us good, and to render us happy. He cannot be benefited by any of his creatures. If his felicity depended upon

them,

them, or was in any measure augmented by
 their homage, he would have created them
 much sooner—for who could stay his hand?
 But what is the sun the better for the earth?
 Is it warmer or brighter in its rays? Would
 not her vapours, and smoke, obscure and
 conceal it from human view, if its own genial
 heat did not penetrate the thick gloom, and
 disperse the noxious exhalations? So, what can
 our God receive from us? “Our goodness,”
 if we had any, “extendeth not unto him.”
 We may try to eclipse his glory by our per-
 verseness, and rebellion; but we cannot add
 to his bliss. He was perfectly happy before
 we had a being. The Father rejoiced in the
 Son, and the Son in the Father, and both
 mutually in the Holy Ghost. The sun shines
 not more brilliant, because many eyes behold
 it: the great God declares what little occasion
 he hath for man in Psalm 1. 9—12. He hath
 no more need of creature-help to make him
 glorious or happy, than the stars have of a
 gnat to whirl them through their usual circuit,
 or the sun of a glow-worm to brighten its ra-
 dian beams. Were we all to perish, he
 would sustain the same loss, as a nobleman
 would receive from the death of a hundred, or
 a thousand lame helpless beggars, who daily
 crowded at his door, and lived on his bounty.
 God’s grand design in erecting so many stately
 fabrics, and replenishing them with so ma-
 ny tribes of inhabitants, was, that he might
 transfuse his kindness, and enlarge the sphere
 of

of his beneficence. He formed us that he might communicate, and not dilate his own happiness—that he might impart his blessings, and not increase the stock. Behold ! what manner of love is this ? But to whom doth he shew this wondrous love ? Not to angels but to men—to poor worms, who dwell here in houses of clay—to sinful, polluted dust and ashes—viler than the beasts of the field, and abundantly more contaminated—fuller of filth than the Augean stable of old, and more difficult to be cleansed. Leprous Miriam, when her flesh was half consumed by her leprosy, was not near so loathsome as we are by reason of sin. No Ethiopian was ever so black—no leopard was ever so spotted as our in-bred corruptions have rendered us. We are, as Homer paints Therfites, a lump of deformity. Our best garments are filthy rags. We are halt and blind—full of wounds and putrifying sores. We are a generation of vipers—the old serpent’s genuine brood. We are enemies to Jesus Christ in our thoughts, in our words, and in our actions. We hate him without a cause with mortal hatred. And we cease not to hate him, until the old heart be taken away, and he hath given us a new heart. Hear what the great Jehovah saith respecting our native defilements.—“ As for thy nativity in the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee ; thou was not salted at all, nor swaddled at all—no eye pitied thee to do

do any of these things unto thee to have compassion upon thee, but thou wast cast into the open field to the loathing of thy person, in the day thou wast born, and when I passed by thee and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, live!" Ezek. xvi. 4—6. O conscience! conscience! conscience! awake from thy deadly stupor, and ponder—intensely ponder on the height, and depth, of redeeming love. Behold! the ever-blessed Immanuel hath pity on those, whom none else will pity. Nay, he who sits enthroned above, encircled by myriads of his obedient creatures, who never opposed his will, or resisted his authority, hath pity on those, who have no pity on themselves, and have been all their days flying in his face, and fighting against him, with his own weapons. O what compassion is this, O what tenderness is here shewn to sinners—the chief of sinners—the worst—the vilest, who tread the earth, and can hardly be matched in hell! If men be not impressed with this amazing truth, or do not feel its powerful force, their hearts are hard indeed, if they will not be struck with deep astonishment at this, heaven and earth will unite in arraigning their more than inanimate stupidity, and in wondering that such a degree of insensibility should dwell in human minds. Alas! one would think that if their hearts were so callous as to be proof against such matchless goodness as this is, it would be enough to discourage any

any further application to them; and that they would be given over as incorrigible, who were not influenced by so much love. But God's ways are not like our ways, and his thoughts are not like our thoughts. He is not wearied out by our obduracy, but still waits to be gracious unto us. Which leads me

Secondly, to consider the attitude of the person who is soliciting our regard—"he stands." To stand implies being ready at every call, and glad to yield any assistance, when it is either desired, or permitted to be given. Stephen, when he was going to be crushed under a shower of stones, "saw the heavens opened, and the son of man standing on the right hand of God." Acts vii. 55. He had been often represented as sitting there, when the trials of his church were less bloody, and demanded no such vigorous and immediate aid: but Stephen saw him standing. This blessed martyr had entered the lists with the beasts at Jerusalem, and was just going to encounter the king of terrors, arrayed in its most hideous form: but the great captain of his salvation had his eye fixed upon him, and, like a mighty warrior "having his sword girded upon his thigh" Psalm xlv. 3. stood—ready to rush into the midst of the battle to give his feeble saint the victory, though he was, in one sense overcome, so the Lord Jesus stands at the door in my text, and his attitude is a plain emblem that he, together with a
train

train of his graces, is ready to take possession of our hearts, if we have but grace to open unto him, and let him in. Oh! what a blessing it is to be an habitation, or a seat of residence for the sacred Trinity! This is the peculiar privilege, which renders heaven itself compleat and desirable. Well, Jesus is ready to confer this privilege upon us, and lest we should be seduced by the charms of this vain world, and prevented from accepting it, he, as in an agony of love, dissolves into this tender wish, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me always!" Deut. v. 29. In what moving terms doth he address us—"Return, return, O Shulamite! return, return, that we may look upon thee." Canticles vi. 13. With what deep sighs, and floods of tears doth he weep over us, and say,—“O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou who killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” Matt. xxiii. 37. Jesus doth not act the part of an actor, or hypocrite, when he weeps. He is no disssembler, and wears no mask. It is either our prosperity or adversity, that draws tears of sorrow from him. If he is grieved, it is because of the hardness of our hearts. He would have us lay hold on his mercy, but we alas! let it drop from our hands. We will not feed, and live upon it.

Oh ! this is the source of his uneasiness—this is the ground of his complaint against us. If he were not disposed to come in, he would not stand at our door. His very attitude discovers his willingness to enter under our unworthy roof. Behold the King of glory standing at the door of slaves, who prefer the devil's base servitude before his glorious liberty, and would sooner serve in hell than reign in heaven. Hence it is that our blessed Lord wrings his hands, and loudly utters his heart-felt concern, saying—"ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." John v. 40. My God ! what words are these ? Surely they are piercing enough to rend the hardest rock. What ! are our hearts turned into adamant, or is the very adamant itself turned into hearts ? Be it so : yet his patience is not exhausted, and his forbearance is not worn out.

Though we spurn his grace and despise his goodness, yet he still stands at our door. He will take no denial. He will stand at the door, that was never opened to him. Though he is treated with neglect, and often with contempt and disdain ; yet such is the long suffering of my redeeming God ! that he calmly bears the roughest usage, and late retreats from his unwelcome station. He hath the power in his hands to burst open every door by force, but he hath the patience in his heart to stand, and wait for admission. He can

can scorch us with his lightnings to death, but he would rather soften us with his dew. Forty years long did he bear with Israel in the wilderness, and his soul was grieved with that perverse generation: in half that time he might have tortured every nerve in their bodies, and racked their whole frame. Where is the man, who would have born with a brother so long—especially when he was exasperated, and he had it in his power to shew his resentment? But his compassions fail not; and therefore were they not consumed.

At another time he thus complains of their rebellious disposition, notwithstanding their great obligations to him—"for the children of Israel, and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the Lord. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of my anger, and of my fury from the day that they built it, even to this day."

Jer. xxxii. 30, 31. Where is Plato, whose face was never flushed with anger? Where is Socrates, whose countenance was always chearful in spite of Xantippe's vehement temper, and unruly tongue? Yea, where is Job, that living picture of patience, which is holden forth to our view in holy writ? The patience of some men is great: but it can no more be compared with the Redeemer's than a drop may be compared with the ocean.

God alone is patience itself. Oh! what a pity it is, that there should be such insects in the moral world as can suck venom from so sweet a flower.

On unbelievers it hath this unhappy effect. They think in their hearts, if they do not publicly utter their thoughts—"He delays the execution of his threats. They are the fiction of the crafty to delude the weak. All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, and they will, in all likelihood, continue so for ever. When is the long-expected dissolution of this material world to take place; where is the promise of his coming?" Where! in the book of God: and sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one tittle of it shall not be fulfilled.

What you call delay, O vain men! is only an exercise of the mildest attribute towards you, and the goodness of God should lead you to repentance instead of hardening you in your sins. He will come, and with those very eyes shall you behold him to your eternal confusion, if you live and die in your present wretched condition. But I spare you—and turn to the door to see if the Lamb be still standing before it. He doth, blessed be his name! he doth yet stand there. But how long? for ever? no: The longest day hath an end. The brightest sun will set. Long doth our Lord's forbearance last. Slow is his wrath to kindle. But when it begins to blaze,

blaze, all the rivers in the south cannot quench it.

O! My soul! answer him whilst he calls. Open whilst he knocks. May the love of Jesus wrestle with thee and prevail! mayest thou not resist him as others do! For alas! he hath in general but little encouragement to wait upon sinners, and stand at their door. Sometimes they put him off with trifling excuses, saying, 'I have no leisure to run to the door, and open to thee. I have some more important business in hand, than attending upon thee: come at some other time, I cannot admit thee now, because I have other strangers within—a few choice companions, for whom I have the highest esteem. They may be offended with thy presence: and I must not offend those, whom I really love. Go thy way for this time, and when the coast is quite clear, or when I have a leisure hour, and a convenient opportunity, I will send for thee.'

This is the usual reception, that he meets with in our world. He sees sin, his greatest foe, fostered and cherished within, whilst he is shut out as unworthy of admittance. "Yet I stand," saith the unwearied Redeemer, 'at the door of a sinner—the worst of all my creatures, whilst my sworn enemies are regaling themselves in the house, and are honoured with the heartiest welcome, O heart! heart! heart! open to me.' Open! what must be opened? The heart. Not only the door of

our lips, but the door of our hearts must be opened. Indeed both must be opened—for our Saviour saith, “when you pray, say:” Luke xi, 2. not only meditate, but speak with your tongues. Yet the confession of the mouth and the belief of the heart must go together. Romans x, 10. He doth not require the bark of the one without the root of the other. Nay, the service of the lips, in which the heart bears no part, is an abomination in his sight. His constant demand is—“my son, give me thy heart.” Prov. xxiii. 26. I do not regard thy outward mien. Thy eyes darted towards heaven—thy knees pressing the ground and thy hand smiting thy bosom have no weight with me. A talent of speech, if it be not seasoned with love, will profit thee nothing. 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

Aeschines presented the best gift to his master, which was himself; and Socrates prized it more than the richest presents of his other scholars. The heart is a pearl of the greatest value. Surrender it to thy God: He would rather have it than all the sparkling diamonds of Golconda. All thy sacrifices without it are rank sacrilege. If thy heart be pure and upright, thou art altogether as white as snow in Salmon. The Lord hath made it clean. Return to him his own workmanship. It is he who created it anew. Give him the glory of it. Keep thine alms, though they are a sweet-smelling savour unto the Lord. Keep thy prayers, though they are like incense, be-

fore

fore him. Keep thy thousands of rams, and thy ten thousands of rivers of oil, though thou mayest well spare them, and be never a whit the poorer for such profusion. All will not be accepted without the heart. It is true, that a crown of glory awaits your alms, and every other good deed that is done in faith: but what are all your offerings without the devotion of the heart. It is the temple that sanctifies the gold, and the altar that sanctifies the gift. Matt. xxiii, 17, 18. "Let your gifts be to yourselves," saith the great Jehovah, "and give your rewards to another," if your hearts go not with your gifts. Prayer is a kind of heavenly conversation, or a dialogue between the soul and its maker. It is a chain which serves to keep heaven and earth together. Yea, with reverence be it spoken, it brings the Lord down to us—"for the Lord is nigh unto all them who call upon him." Psalm cxlv. 18. Yet after all, what are our prayers if they flow not from our hearts. They are but solemn mockeries, which deserve a curse, rather than a blessing. I proceed now in the

† Last place, to consider our Lord's employment while he stands at the door of our hearts—"he knocks." How? 1st By the ministry of his word. This is a very powerful knocking. What fortress can resist its force? The weapons of our warfare" saith Paul, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations,

imaginations, and every high thing that
 exalteth itself against the knowledge of God
 and bringing into captivity every thought to
 the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.
 Mankind have brazen foreheads, adamantine
 necks, and ribs of marble around their hearts
 —they bleed not, they bend not, they blush
 not. Now, the word is the hammer, which
 breaks the rock within them; and the holy
 spirit is the fire, which dissolves and melts it.
 Though they stop their ears like the deaf
 adder, and refuse to hear the voice of the
 charmer, let him charm ever so wisely — though
 they stick one ear close to the earth that they
 may stuff it with the filth of covetousness, and
 fill the other with lustful strains, or low ribald-
 ry: yet some of these adders have been
 charmed by the word, and captivated by its
 pleasing enchantment. Their deaf ears have
 been unstopped by the heavenly carols. Their
 hearts have been opened, and the music of
 the gospel hath thrilled through all their joints
 and marrow. Aaron's silver bells have ra-
 vished them. Now there are no songs like
 the songs of Sion. Now there is no pleasure
 like that of religion. Oh how barren and
 unfruitful is the soul of man, until the
 word descends like rain upon it, and it is wa-
 tered with the dew of heaven. But oh! when
 a few drops have entered it and made it supple,
 what a rich harvest of graces do they produce.
 What choice fruits do spring in it? Is the
 heart so full of malice that the most suppliant
 knee

knee can expect no pardon for the least offence? Is it as hard to be pacified or as difficult to be calmed, as the roaring sea when agitated by the most furious tempest? Is it a covetous heart? Yea, is it so covetous that no scene of distress can soften it into sympathy, and no object of wretchedness can extort a penny from its gripping claws? Is it a wanton or adulterous heart? which may be as soon satisfied as the sea can be filled with gold; Be it so: yet when the word "shall drop upon it as the rain, and distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:" Deut. xxxii. 2. behold! in an instant the flint is turned into flesh—the tumultuous sea is hushed into a calm, and the mountains of Gilboa are cloathed with herbs and flowers, where a little before there was not a green blade to be seen. See the mighty change that grace effects in the human heart. It converts Zaccheus, the hard-hearted publican and rapacious tax-gatherer into a restorer of what he had unjustly gotten, and a merciful reliever of the distressed and needy. It tames the furious persecuting Saul, and makes him gentle as a lamb. It cloaths Ahab with sackcloth and ashes. It reduces Felix to such anguish of mind, that he trembles like an aspen leaf. It disposes Peter to leave his nets, and enables him to catch thousands of souls at a draught in the gospel net. Behold! the world is converted to the faith, not by the magicians of Egypt, but by the outcasts of Judea.

Before

Before these the exorcists cannot stand. 'The words of fishermen are read,' saith Austin, and learned orators yield them the palm of victory.' They who are taken from the war, confute philosophers, overthrow the strong holds of idolatry, and plant christianity on its ruins. They could with truth assert what in the Roman Emperor was mere arrogance and gasconade—'veni, vidi, vici, that is, I came, I saw, I conquered.' For they overcame as many nations as they saw, not with the edge of the sword, but with the sword of the mouth, which divides asunder the soul and spirit." O ye nations! what aileth ye? O sea! wherefore hast thou fled? and thou Jordan! why wast thou driven back? Why O mountains! did ye skip like rams, and you little hills! like young sheep?" Psalm cxiv. 5, 6. Though these words, in their original import, are expressive of Israel's triumphs in their march to Canaan; yet they may be accommodated to the present case, and in allusion to it I may ask—"What hath befallen you, O sinners! that you forsake your sinful courses, and abhor the wicked practices, in which you once took the greatest delight? Why do you flee like trembling hinds, and quake at the voice of a man?" verily the finger of God hath done this. May this divine finger reach your hearts through the lattices, and set them in motion, that you too may run after him!

2. He knocks by his mercies. God's mercy is a proper text for angels to com-

comment upon, and a suitable subject for their eternal praises. It is one of his dearest attributes—the object of his delight. Heaven would be a hell without it. Hear how the triumphant choirs sing, and join your voice to theirs. “The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great kindness: yea, his mercy is over all his works.” Psalm cxlv. 8. What! over all his works. Doth it extend to the starry firmament above our heads—that expanded roof, which is bespangled with so many brilliant lamps—that gilded vault which terminates our utmost view? yes it is higher still. “It reaches unto the heavens.” Psalm xxxvi 5. It pervades universal nature. Heaven and earth O Lord, are full of thy mercy. Moses speaking of his goodness to Israel saith—“He kept them as the apple of his eye. He bare them on his wings like an eagle. He gave them the increase of the fields to eat, and made them suck honey out of the rock. He fed them with butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs and rams of the breed of Bashan.” Deut. xxxii. 10, 11, &c. O for strength to speak unto your consciences! which of you is it that hath not experienced that God is good? who among us is not a monument of his mercy? we sit under our own fig tree: we bask in the cherishing warmth of his sun. Our bones are moistened with marrow, and our inward parts are filled with his hid treasure. We cannot say with the apostle
—“Silver

—“Silver and gold we have none.” No,
 —“the very waves of the sea,” as Pindar
 writes concerning the city of Rhodes, “con-
 vey gold into our treasury :” and the clouds of
 heaven shower down upon us richer dew than
 that of Hermon. Oh ! how sweetly doth he
 knock ! “arise my beloved, and open unto
 me. Behold ! I stand at the door and knock.”

3. He knocks by afflictions. God’s mes-
 sengers they are, and their sollicitation is close
 and pressing. O that they may succeed in
 their errand ! O that they may turn us unto
 the Lord our God ! For this purpose they are
 sent, and it is better to have them than to be
 without them. Demetrius declares, “that
 people are unhappy, because they never feel
 real misery.” Sanctified affliction is a choice
 blessing. The ten lepers came to Jesus Christ ;
 but nine, out of the ten, fled from him when
 they had been made whole. It was the lepro-
 sy that brought Naaman the Syrian to the
 prophet in Israel. The prodigal son remem-
 bered his father’s house at the swine’s troughs.
 If the messenger of Satan had not buffeted
 Paul, he would have affronted his God by
 being lifted up above measure. Afflictions
 have often been productive of great good to
 the wicked, and always have a tendency to
 drive believers nearer unto God. Mannasseh,
 Nebuchadnezzar, &c. had reason to thank
 God for these mercies in disguise, which
 were the honoured instruments of their con-
 version. And if success were at all times to
 attend

attend our undertakings, and we were to be still strangers unto sickness of body and anxiety of mind, what vain creatures would we be? how would we wander, like blazing comets, from our center of rest, and diffuse our baleful influence far and wide? When Alexander supposes himself to be great—great is the flattery which reigns in his court. This twists round his heart, and ascribes immortality unto him—calling him God. As it is easy to prevail with us, to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, and to set a greater value upon outward marks of distinction, than they really deserve; so Alexander greedily swallowed the delicious bait and never discovered his error till he groaned in the midst of the poisonous draught, and was carried out of the fatal feast half dead. Then he knew that he was a man—a mortal man. Behold! how much better had adversity been than such prosperity. The poor are not liable to such extravagant adulation. In them therefore the bubble of pride cannot be blown so big. For, how can it be full tide in the mind, when the possessions are at low ebb? or, when the breasts of the world are embittered, who will suck vanity out of them? What will render home more pleasant to us than being exercised with many difficulties, and involved in many dangers while we are abroad? If it were not for the frost and cold of winter, we should not be so glad to see the return of summer. It was when the prodigal

was feeding upon husks that he thought best of his father's house. On the contrary, the remembrance of the flesh-pots of Egypt, and the plenty that there reigned, made Israel loath even Canaan itself. When do our pulses beat slowest after heaven? When do our souls pant the least after our eternal home? Alas! it is when our pride rustles in silk—when our greatness is cloathed in purple, and embroidered with needle work? when riches flow in upon us, and descend like rain into a fleece of wool—when honour smiles upon us, and every thing that we take in hand succeeds. Oh! success without grace is the greatest curse that can befall us. Ephraim, unaccustomed to the yoke, lifts up his heel against heaven; but Israel, when smitten and slain, “returned and enquired early after God.” Psalm lxxviii. 34. David's most melodious sonnets were indited in his forest troubles and amidst floods of tears. Wherefore he saith—“it is good for me that I have been afflicted.” Worthy is that rod of our warmest caresses, which beats us off from our sins, and dislodges them from our bosoms.

4. He knocks by his judgments. “In the way of thy judgments O Lord have we waited for thee. In trouble have we visited thee, we poured out a prayer, when thy chastening was upon us,” Isaiah xxvi. 8. Sometimes he knocks at the next door to us. By striking at our neighbours, he warns us. Their punishment is our example. “Except ye repent,
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ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 5. If the cedars fall, let the fig-trees tremble; they may be rooted up by the same tempest. Though the cloud may be gathering at a distance, yet it may break over our heads. The sword, that hath drank the blood of yonder people, may possibly not be satisfied till it hath been glutted with ours also. When the next house is on fire; shall I unconcernedly warm myself at its flames: may not a spark fly from it and catch my roof? Let Nero sing, while Rome is burning: but let the losses of others be an admonition unto us. Happy is the man that learns instruction from the corrections of another, and provides for his own safety, when he sees the judgments of God hovering around him.

5. He knocks by the law. This shews in its true colours, and in its own features. As it was given at first with thunder and lightning, so it still descends like a thunderbolt on the heart of man. Indeed it strikes with irresistible energy, and makes a dreadful havock wherever it falls. It quite erases all false foundations, and utterly destroys all presumptuous and vain hopes. The experiences of thousands bear testimony to this truth; though the unhumiliated in heart do slight and disbelieve it. Thus it loudly sounds in the sinners ears, when he is first awakened — "O wretched creature! the wrath of God is revealed against thee, and already enkindled in thy soul. Thy sins supply it with a con-

stant accession of fuel; and it will burn thee to the depth of hell, unless thou wilt open thy heart, and suffer Jesus Christ to come in and extinguish it. Say not with the church of Laodicea, "I am rich and have need of nothing — for thou art miserable, poor, blind, and naked." Flatter not thyself with the idle conceit that thy soul is happy, and thy condition safe; which is the groundless plea of every unregenerate person: but admit conviction in its full force, and let it humble thee to the very dust." This is the voice of the law, and until it hath thus knocked at the sinner's heart, he thinks but little about escaping from the wrath to come. Paul himself saith — "I was alive without the law" once. I entertained a good opinion of the state of my soul, and saw myself in no manner of danger: but when the law reached me in its convincing power; I died: all my high conceits, and towering hopes drooped their heads, and withered, one blow from the law overset my whole babel-building, and turned it upside down." So sinners, you must hear something like this, before you will ever be concerned about your souls, or be anxious about fleeing into a city of refuge. You will never be truly awakened till you have heard the law proclaiming this alarming sentence to your consciences — "You are fallen from God. You have broken his covenant, and transgressed his laws. In you there dwelleth no good. You are as dark in your understandings, as the

the prince of darkness could make you—so stripped of your original righteousness, that you have not a rag to cover your nakedness—so despoiled in every faculty of your souls, that, like a marred vessel, you are only fit for destruction. In this melancholy situation you are, and in it you will remain for ever, if you keep Jesus Christ out of your hearts, or refuse him admittance when he condescends to knock.”

6. He knocks by the gospel. This sets forth the inestimable preciousness of the Lord Jesus—the riches of his grace—the fullness of his redemption, and the sweetness of that pardoning love which flows through his blood. This is its language to the weary, and heavy laden sinner—‘ though thou art naked, yet open to me ; and I will cloath thee with the garment of salvation. Though thou art blind, yet open to me, and I will give thee that eye salve, which can make them see who were born blind. Though thou art poor, yet open to me ; and I will enrich thee with the unsearchable treasures of my grace. Though thou art miserable, yet open to me ; and then if my love, my blood, my consolations, my kingdom, or myself can make thee happy—happy shalt thou be.’ If the sinner will refuse this call, and harden himself against the gospel, when it doth so sweetly knock—what can the son of God do, but to array himself in human infirmity, and weep ? Luke xix. 41, 42. Behold what manner of love is this, that the dear Redeemer should be

so melted at the hardness, and unrelenting temerity of those who will not have him to be their Saviour and deliverer! Oh! his bowels yearn over them, and if they were to ask him that question which he once put to Mary—"why weepest thou"—John xx. 15. he would soon reply 'not on my own account do I shed these tears; but because sinners would rather perish than open to me. They prefer their sins before me, and cleave to them, while they take no notice of me. When I knock at the door of their hearts, they will not open them unto me. When I make many fair promises to them, they will not believe me. Wherefore, because my compassion cannot move them, and my readiness to serve them cannot so much as attract their attention, I must give them up as incurable, and reluctantly leave them to the misery on which they are so obstinately bent.'

Much more I might have added upon this branch of the subject: but, with the blessing of God, I have said enough to cause your hearts to fly open to Jesus Christ. Here some may be apt to object—"we can do nothing, and why should *that* be required of us, which it is not in our power to perform." I answer—did you really believe this, it would be well for you. But alas! it is the grand obstacle in your way to happiness, that you are not truly sensible of this. You think that you have sufficient strength of your own for all purposes of religion; and hence it is that you will not go to
God

God for help. While I have store of provisions, why should I beg? but when I perceive my own indigence and weakness, I will turn all God's demands into petitions. When he saith "turn ye! turn ye!" I will earnestly, and eagerly cry out—"turn thou us, and we shall be turned." When he saith "understand;" I will say—"Lord, cause thou us to understand," when he saith, "Pray:" the language of my heart will be, "Lord teach us to pray." If he gives unto us whatsoever he commands, then let him command 'whatsoever he will,' saith Austin. You must remember that though we have lost the power of obeying; yet God hath not lost his authority to demand his just due. If you were to lend a sum of money to a person; and he through his neglect or extravagance, should squander or lose it; could not you insist upon the payment of it, though he should have nothing to pay you? So we received and lost all in Adam. If you will say, 'Adam's fall was without my consent, I did not influence him in it,' I answer—if an earthly king were to bestow a rich inheritance upon either of you on such terms as these 'it shall be thine, and thy heirs for ever, if thou wilt obey me in all things, which I shall require of thee:' would not your disobedience, in case you did not fulfill these terms, forfeit your right to the inheritance, and debar not only you, but your heirs also from all title to it? But though you have lost the power
of

of obeying, and, like Sampson, are shorn of your strength; yet with God all things are possible. When he said—"let there be light, there was light." When he sends out his word he can heal you. His spirit can quicken your dead souls, and enliven your dullest frames. It is in the belief of this, that I now address you: and if a divine energy will accompany the word, I make no doubt of rousing you, dead as you are, to a sense of your danger, and an earnest longing after Jesus Christ. O that he would speak unto you, as he spake unto dead Lazarus, saying—"come forth!" or in the language of the prophet—"O ye dry bones hear the word of the Lord!" † O that this may be the "hour in which the dead among you shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live!" John v. 25. It is his voice alone, that hath this vivi-

† Every faithful ambassador of Christ will preach the gospel unto every creature, and spread forth as far as he can, the infinite compassion and excellencies of the Lamb. He will declare the riches of his atoning blood; and in a pointing manner, shew the sinner his danger and remedy, will invite the indigent to become rich, and the guilty to accept of pardon, and with the Apostle beseech and intreat sinners to be reconciled unto God—without this how can Gospel Ministers be free from the blood of all men, if they warn them not? The Apostles when they were sent out, went and preached every where that men should repent did not our Lord send them forth to the high ways and hedges, and say come for all things are ready compel them to come in, and was not the King wroth because the people made excuses: Behold me! is the language of Christ in the Gospel. If salvation by Jesus Christ is not to be offered—how can sinners be said to refuse and reject? yet God says—"because I have called and ye have refused"—again—ye have put away the word of eternal life. How can a thing be refused if not offered?—If it is not the duty of a sinner to believe—how can unbelief be a sin? That mankind are dead in trespasses and sins is no objection, because the spirit of God is Almighty to quicken—and 'tis his usual method to work in the way abovementioned.

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ifying power in all ages of the world. Let not ministers therefore imagine that they can convert souls by their gifts and persuasive eloquence; but let them rely altogether upon his promise who said, "I am with you always even unto the end of the world." I And if any are brought to the Lord, it is this I who stands at the door and knocks, that is the efficient cause of it. It is the holy Spirit that convinces the world of sin. "Who is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed? Some plant, and others water, but it is the Lord's prerogative to give the increase. May he give it abundantly this day, while I the least and unworthiest of his ministers, conclude my message with the following weighty considerations!

1st. Consider in whose stead, and to whom it is that I beseech you to open your hearts. It is to him who gave and preserves your lives—to him who shed his blood for you, and is kind to you every moment—even "to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Oh! that you could this day be brought to see him, as he is, "white and ruddy—the chiefest among ten thousand". As the prophet prayed for his servant, so it is my earnest petition for you, my dear hearers, that the Lord God would open your eyes.

2. Consider what it is that I desire of you. It is that you would make room for Jesus Christ in your hearts. Great is my fear that he hath no place in your affections, but that,
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with the Bethlehemites, you reserve the best chambers for self and sin ; while he is put off with the stable, and manger : Lamb of God ! patient, spotless Lamb of God ! set up thy throne in our hearts and enable us to cry before thee “ Hosannah to the King of saints.” Finally, consider what you shall have if you will open to him when he knocks, or what are the benefits, which you will receive thereby. You shall have God and his fulness. You shall have on earth a plenitude of his grace, and in heaven an eternal weight of glory. He will be with you here. He will support you in death, and in that last tremendous day—when the heavens shall be rent in twain like a veil, and be rolled together like a scroll—when his Almighty arm shall arrest the sun in its course, and shall dash to pieces the whole system of the universe : then ! O then ! he will own you, and strengthen you to behold the horrible convulsions of expiring nature without fear, or one perplexing thought. He hath prepared glorious mansions for all his followers. Oh ! what tongue can describe the pleasantness of Immanuel’s land ! or what pencil can sketch its excellencies ! Eden itself, in comparison with the heavenly paradise, was but a barren, thorny, desolate wilderness. To this happy state may God of his infinite mercy bring us all through Jesus Christ, Amen.

S E R M O N II.

Free Grace indeed!

Luke xxiii. 42, 43. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*

And Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

IN this passage the glory of Free Grace shines unrivalled. Indeed it is conspicuous throughout the whole scriptures. There we have many instances recorded, which evidence the freeness of that salvation, which is in Jesus; as in the conversion of the woman of Samaria: what did she do to procure the notice of the Saviour of the world? did she draw water for him when he was thirsty, or supply him with a seat when he came to her weary? This mark of respect and attention to his bodily fatigues, had she shewn it, would have been but a poor recompence for his condescension in speaking to her, and a very small

small inducement for him to save her soul. But behold, and wonder ! “ Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth ! *Isaiah* i. 2. be astonished, O heavens, *Jer.* ii. 12 at this ! ” that a person of infamous character should attract his regard, and that an adulteress should be employed to preach the gospel in Samaria. The prospect of his divine skill and amazing dexterity in bringing about such strange, and speedy revolutions in the human mind it was, that made *Isaiah* cry out, “ in the wilderness shall water break out, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and thirsty land springs of water.” *Isaiah* xxxv. 6, 7. Rivers generally keep within their proper bounds, and gently glide in their usual channels : but, at times they overflow their banks, and water the adjacent hillocks. So grace in the case of the Samaritan woman, may be said to make the most barren land fruitful, and a great sinner a publisher of glad tidings to her friends and acquaintance.

Very remarkable was the conversion of Mary Magdalene : and signal was the calling of Paul : yet Mary might have seen several of our Lord’s miracles, and heard many of his sermons ; or the good example of her neighbours might have shewn her, as in a glass, her own deformity, and discovered to her the odiousness of her wicked practices. And with respect to Paul, he was particularly favoured : he saw a “ light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun shining round about him : ”

him :” he heard a powerful voice, which smote him to the earth, and levelled him with that dust, out of which he had been taken. But the thief, mentioned in my text, was, as far as we can learn, left destitute of all these advantages. He saw no miracles, no good example, no glory, no light. He heard no sermons, or voice from heaven. He was suspended on the fatal tree : and drawing near the end of his sinful course, had nothing presented to his view, but a bruised Christ, torn and mangled on the cross, as if he had as justly deserved this doom, as either of those who suffered with him. Here is free grace indeed ! Let our hearts burn with gratitude to our redeeming God, and let our lips resound his praise. Though this man was as far from believing in, and loving his Saviour Jesus Christ, as the east is from the west ; yet he was converted in a few minutes—converted from a thief into a martyr, and translated from the gallows to paradise. What a wonderful change is this ! that a robber, sentenced to the cross, and railing at his fellow sufferer, should, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye, be absolved from his sins, and be enabled to make a public profession of his faith in the divinity of that Jesus, who seemed as a malefactor to expire with him. In this one act all the attributes of God are displayed, and shine with the most glorious splendour : here his *wisdom* appeared in reconciling so speedily things so opposite in their nature. The

preacher saith, that "there is a time to be born, and a time to die—a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted—a time to kill, and a time to heal—a time to break down, and a time to build up—a time to weep, and a time to laugh." Eccl: iii. 2, 3, 4, Now all these things very contrary extremes did wisdom unite, and concenter in the conversion of the thief: behold! he is born to Christ, and dies to the world: behold! grace is planted in his soul, and sin is plucked by the roots from it: behold! the son of God receives deadly wounds in his own body, and heals *his* wounded heart: behold! the body of death broken down, and the work of grace built up: behold him weeping for his sins, and yet rejoicing at the reviving news that he should be so soon with Jesus in paradise! In this wonderful transaction to the *omnipotence* of God is not concealed, St Chrysostom declares 'that this was a greater miracle than that the sun was darkened, that the earth was shaken, that the rocks were cleaved asunder, or that the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom.' What was the darkening of the sun, when compared with the enlightening of a dark understanding: what was the cleaving of rocks in comparison with the softening of a hard, stony, adamantine heart? or the rending of the temple vail, with the removal of the vail of Ignorance from the soul! the rod with which Moses evidenced his divine mission, is a strong confirmation, as well as a pertinent illustra-

Illustration of this truth. It had authority over the earth, the sea, and the elements: light, darkness, and every creature within its reach were subjects to its command. But it had no power, or influence over Pharaoh's hard heart. Behold! it is easier to tear the rock in pieces, than to melt the human heart. O Jesus! none but thy spirit can do it. Here thy omnipotence was farther manifested in making this very thief an instrument of thy revenge on the devil, on the Pharisees, on Pilate, and on the people. 'The devil,' saith St. Ambrose, 'was ready to boast in every place, that he was a great conqueror; since, though Jesus had but twelve Apostles, he had seduced one of them, and brought him over to his side, by persuading him that it was more eligible to be a thief, than an Apostle.' But see how he is foiled at his own weapons! Instead of Judas, a petty pilferer, who out of the penury of the holy congregation, had squeezed a few mites for himself, and by this sacrilegious deed rather gratified his covetousness, than enlarged his property; our Lord made a notorious robber his captive, and snatched as his prize, a man, who had spent all his time in the service of the devil. Thieves are the devil's agents: but the dear Jesus laid hold on the vilest of them, rescued him from the infernal band, and left the devil to ruminate, at his leisure, on his disgraceful overthrow. It is said in the song of Solomon, "I have compared thee, O my love, to a com-

pany of horses in Pharaoh's chariot." Cant. i. 9. Solomon, as a certain author asserts, had at all times a great number of Egyptian horses in his train, and whenever he went to war with the Egyptians, he fought against them with their own horses: so doth the church embarrass and confound the devil by those agents of his, who are thieves and robbers. O how ought it to have covered Pilate, the Pharisees, the Priests, and the people with shame, that a thief should know the Lord better than they, and that his tongue should be loud in confessing his attachment to him, while all their tongues were glued in silence: Here is a triumph which bespeaks the valiant leader, and a victory which Jesus only could obtain.

But to proceed: The humility of our Lord is clearly seen in his submitting to be extended on the ignominious cross to save a thief. Oh! to what depth of abasement did he descend that he might do us good. It was astonishing condescension in him, that "he took upon him the form of a man;" Phil. ii. 8. greater condescension it was, that he assumed the "form of a servant," Phil. v. 7. and greater still it was, that he became "a worm and no man;" Ps. xxii. 6. but greater than all it was, that he died, like a thief, between two thieves. In the garden Jesus told them, who came to apprehend him, "are you come out as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take me." Matt. xxvi. 55. There he

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was apprehended, as if he had been a thief: here he dies like a thief, in consequence of an unjust condemnation. A thief is rather more detestable than any other criminal; because the temptations to this crime are not so cogent as to many other sins. You may read in Leviticus xi. of unclean beasts; such as the weasel, the mouse, and the kite, &c. and in the history of them you will find that, as they are all thieves, so they are forbidden under the law, to be either food or sacrifice. But behold the *love* of Christ! he accepts the tongue of a thief, and permits it to proclaim his innocence. He could, with equal ease, have used a prophet's or an evangelist's tongue, and made it subservient to his glory. But he chose the tongue of a thief, that, from the meanness of the instrument, his power might be more apparent. Sampson slew armed men with the jawbone of an ass, which, though it was a blunt and untowardly weapon, yet discovered his strength, and gave surer proofs of his prowess, than if he had been furnished with the sword of Goliath, or with the club of Hercules.

Here is *compassion*—unbounded compassion displayed: the Lord of life pouring out the blood of his heart in the midst of thieves, that he might expiate the guilt of one of them. Last of all, here are *expertness* and uncommon *dispatch* shewn. Jesus is a curious, and expeditious workman. He doeth wonders. When a tree hath grown awry and all its branches

lean to one side, it is a hundred to one, but that it will in the end fall on that side. But here is a man, whose bias had been strong towards hell all his life long, who yet, when he comes to be cut down, hath his inclinations turned heavenwards. His crookedness is not only made straight, but his perverseness is cured, and his soul is fitted for an inheritance among them who are sanctified. O who could be so dexterous as to effect all this, in so short a time, but the chief architect himself ! With what expedition doth he finish his work ! In an instant he carried this man through every necessary grace, and brought into actual exercise in him godly fear, repentance, prayer, confession, and faith to lay hold on his promise.

By saving one thief, and leaving the other to receive the due reward of his deeds, is signified to us, that the "election prevailed." "I loved Jacob and I hated Esau : " Mal. i. 2, 3. yea, saith St. Paul, "before the children were born or had done either good or evil." Rom. ix. 11. And again he saith, "hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Rom. ix. 21. God's judgments are very secret, and unsearchable. It is our duty to honour, and reverence them, rather than to dispute about them ; ever crying out with the Apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !" Rom. xi. 23. Austin observes that
Pharaoh

Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar were equally blessed with respect to the means of conversion, but that these means had a very different effect upon them; the one was hardened, and the other was humbled. They were both men, both kings, of the same nature, and guilty of the same crime: both led the children of God into captivity. Both evil intreated Israel, and caused them to shed abundance of tears, while they smarted under their scourge. Both were visited with plagues from heaven, and both were alike admonished to know the rod; and him who appointed it. How then came the same means not to make the same impression upon them? One of them was led to say, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and honour the king of heaven;" Dan. iv. 37. while the other persisted in his obstinacy, and at the eve of life, exclaimed, "who is the Lord?" The Almighty loves to display his sovereignty, and to act freely without controul. "I will" saith he, to Moses, "be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." Exod. xxxiii. 19. None durst call Pharaoh to account for his treatment of Joseph's fellow-prisoners, i. e. for advancing one from prison to his former office, and for hanging the other. No: we chose to be at liberty ourselves to do as we please; but we would confine the Lord to do as we like, and limit his dealings with the children of men within the bounds of our narrow conception.

tion. We would lay Righteousness itself, to our crooked line, and find fault, if it doth not agree with our scanty admeasurement. But notwithstanding all outcry, as if "his ways were not equal," he will do what seemeth good in his own sight, without consulting us, or being influenced by our opinions. "Where two are in the field; one shall be taken, and the other shall be left." Matt. xxiv. 40, 41. Down therefore in the dust let us bow before him, and acknowledge our acquiescence in his sovereign will.

The next instruction, that may be gathered from the distinguishing favour shewn to one of the thieves, who, when on the cross, reviled our Lord, and cast the same reproaches in his teeth as the other, is this: we may learn from the mercy reached to the one, and withholden from the other, that the safest way to heaven is between hope and fear. Fear is the cable which lays hold on hope, and hope is the anchor which keeps fear firm. Fear makes thee cowardly, and fainthearted, when thou considerest what thou art; how little good there is in thee, how unworthy thou art of any blessing; yea even to breathe in God's air: but hope makes thee bold, and enterprizing, by shewing thee how good the Lord is; how infinite he is in his mercy, and matchless in his love, yea, even millions of degrees "surpassing the love of women." 2 Sam. i. 26. Upon these graces of hope and fear doth the Lord confer his benefits, and dispense his gifts.

gifts. "He taketh pleasure in them who fear him, in those who hope in his mercy." Psalm cxlvii. 11. His blessed eyes are, as it were, fastened on those, who fear him, and put their trust in his goodness. Of Issachar, Jacob prophesied, "that he should be a strong ass, couching down between two burthens." Gen. xlix. 14. He could not miss his way between these two burdens, which, like two hedges, kept him from straying either to the right hand or to the left. In like manner, O believer, is thy passage to everlasting life strait, and secure between the fear of hell and hope of heaven: the one preserves thee from presumption and the other from despair. There is more efficacy in godly fear; (though any fear is better than none) than the world is aware of. The less thou hast to lose, the less is thy fear of losing it. 'Old age hath made me fearless' was the Romans reply to Cæsar, when he threaten'd to kill him. His meaning was, that as, in the course of nature, he had but few years to live, he was unconcerned whether he should die then, or drag on a life, which could not last much longer. But the just may think within himself, that he hath an eternity before him, which he may come short of, if he be not kept in fear of sinning, and continually waiting, in hope for the coming of his Lord. Here then are two strong bulwarks to fence you on each side, and to keep you in the narrow path. The one is the thief, who was left to perish in his unbelief, and the other is the

the thief who found favour with the Lord : the former of whom should teach you to fear, lest any of you should " run and not obtain." Heb. iv. 1. the prize. Some may to appearance, be near heaven, while they stand on the brink of hell ; and others may seem to be verging towards destruction, while God is drawing them to himself. " Take heed therefore to yourselves, watch and pray : " Luke viii. 18. and the latter, when you consider his condition, and the time of his deliverance, should silence the reasonings of despondency, and encourage your confidence ; seeing there is a Jesus who can deliver at the eleventh hour, and " save to the uttermost those who come unto God by him." Heb. vii. 25. The devil tried every invention that he could devise, to thrust Job from his center, and to lessen his trust in God. By fire from heaven he destroyed his substance. By the bitter words of his companions, and intimate friends, he rendered his life a burthen unto him, and, as it were expostulated with him to his face, saying,—" What canst thou do now, but despond and die ? Thou hast no room to look for help either from God or man. Thou art utterly rejected. There is no one who hath pity on thee. Come then curse thy God and die." Yet Job maintained his confidence in God, and professed that " though he should slay him, yet he would trust in him." Job. xiii. 15.

St. Ambrose supposes that despair is a more heinous sin than any other, not as it is the greatest offence against God, but as it is the most dangerous to men. It bars the gate of blessedness against them, and cuts off every possibility of their salvation. Hence it is foremost on the black list, as if the Almighty was more sensible of the evil, which they do to themselves, than of that which is done against himself. It is without a doubt that he seeks the happiness of his people in all things, and that "he hath delight in the prosperity of his servants." Psalm xxxv. 27. Judas's despair had a tendency to do greater injury to Jesus Christ than his selling him: for by selling him, he only despised his manhood; but by his despair he cast the greatest slur on his Godhead, and judged him to be, like himself, devoid both of the will, and of the power to relent. As he could not pacify or forgive himself, he thought that the Lord must likewise be inexorable, or as hard to forgive: and so he was for exterminating this holy one of Israel. "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain." Jude 11. How is that? They suppose their 'iniquity to be greater than can be pardoned,' Gen. iv. 13. as he testified of old. But St. Austin saith '*mentiris Caine! mentiris Caine!* thou art mistaken Caine: greater is the Lord's mercy than the sins of the whole world. O wonderful and infinite goodness, which can bring

bring life out of death, light out of darkness, the salvation of sinners, out of the condemnation of the Saviour, and deigns to bestow that paradise on the thief upon the cross, which was forfeited by Adam in the height of his integrity ! When God's people said, " our bones are dried, and our hope is lost : " Ezek. xxxvii. 11. his answer by his prophet was, " I will open your graves, and you shall live." And to imprint this truth the deeper on their hearts he quickened a valley, which was full of dead bones into actual life. God's mercy knows neither measure nor end. O let us call upon him with eager importunity, and he will hear us. Let us seek for grace to repent, and he will pardon us. Nay we can never be so much pleased and delighted in being forgiven, as he is in forgiving us. Who then should distrust or give way to despondency.

Let us now consider the great change, which divine grace wrought in this man.

First, all that he had he gave to the Lord. His hands, and feet were nailed to the cross. Over these he had no command. Only his heart and tongue were at his disposal : and these he freely devoted to the service of Jesus : his tongue to vindicate his uprightness, saying, " that he had done nothing amiss ; " and his heart to love him, wishing to be with him in his kingdom : yea, his tongue to confess him, and his heart to believe in him. Herein is comprized the whole of man's salvation. " If thou

thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Rom. x. 9.

Secondly, he bare witness against himself, saying, "we receive the due rewards of our deeds." This is usual with the godly. They confess their transgressions unto the Lord, and their iniquity do they not hide." Psalm xxxii.

5. The prodigal said unto his father, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Luke xv. 21. And the publican in like manner, smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Luke xviii. 13.

To this acknowledgment of our guilt, and abhorrence of our selves for our misdeeds, we are principally and above all things exhorted by our blessed Lord; "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself." Mark viii.

34. Had Adam accused instead of excusing himself, it is probable, that he would not have been driven out of paradise. How much better had it been for Judas, humanly speaking to have said, "I am he master;" than to ask, "Lord is it I?" He forfeited heaven by seeming to be what he was not. Oh! self-condemnation is a precious grace in the sight of God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful, and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John i. 9.

Thirdly, he prayed, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." With

what humility is his request fraught! "remember me." He doth not pray, "Lord, make me a citizen of thy kingdom, or honour me, as thou usest to honour those, who wait upon thee, or, crown me with a crown of glory that fadeth not away." No, no, his ambition doth not tower so high; but with tears in his eyes, he only sobs out, "remember me." 'I deserve nothing but misery. I have not the happy privilege to die for thee, but I die with thee. It is the grief and distress of my soul, that I knew thee not sooner, that I might have endured the torture of the cross in thy service, and for thy sake; that I might have laid down my life, yea millions of lives, if I had them, as a sacrifice of oblation to thy love.' He doth not pray, 'Lord take away these pains of death, under which I labour; remove these agonies, and make my passage easy to the invisible world:' no, no, but he saith, 'I deserve to suffer, and let my sufferings, whether they be quick, or lingering, acute or torpid, terminate in my death; only *remember me*: if it be long before thou comest into thy kingdom, let me suffer till thou dost come. I will not think thee tedious: only remember me sometime.'

Fourthly, he had great faith. It may be compared with the faith of Abraham, Isaiah, Moses, the woman of Canaan, &c. And it may well be supposed, that his faith exceeded all theirs. If Abraham believed, it is not so much to be wondered at, because he received great,

great, and precious promises from the Lord himself. If Isaiah believed, it is not so marvellous, because he “ saw the Lord sitting on his throne, in glory, and great majesty; surrounded with those Seraphims, who cried unto one another, and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah vi. 1, 2, 3, 4. If Moses believed, who can be surprized at the report? why? because “ the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.” If the faith of the three disciples was great, great was the sight which they had of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light; and while a bright cloud overshadowed them, they heard a voice out of the cloud, which said, “ This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” Mat. xvii. 2, 5. Something similar to this may be said of Paul’s faith, Nathaniel’s faith, and the woman of Canaan’s faith, &c. But the thief saw not the Lord either on his throne, or in the bush, on the mount or in the cloud, in the scriptures or in his miracles. It is conjectured, that he had heard how Judas betrayed and sold him, how his disciples had forsaken him, and how the people slighted and hated him. Indeed he hears their blasphemy, and perfectly understands the danger of owning any acquaintance

with him. Yet notwithstanding all these forbidding circumstances, yea, though he sees him hanging on the cross, he makes his petition to him with as much fervour, and abasement, as if he eyed him sitting on his throne in heaven. What can be added to this man's faith? I know not. He believes in Jesus in the face of every obstacle, and proclaims his glory, while he was in the depth of his humiliation. O the stupendous work of God! who would not put their trust in him! Some who had seen our Lord raising the dead, were afterwards shaken in their faith, and at times were known to waver: but this man firmly believed in him, when he beheld him nailed to the cross, and sinking under the pains of death in his own person. Doubtless he was confident that *he* would rise again, or he would not have prayed to him, when he was dying. Yes, yes, he was enabled to believe in the resurrection of the dead: and this is a desirable article in the church's creed. He had also grace to believe the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting continuance of the life to come. See how grace exceeds nature! His fellow thief knew of no life but the present. Deliverance here was all that he desired. Oh! he cared not for the eternal world. *He* only said, "if thou be Christ, save thy self and us. If thou hast any power, exert it in rescuing us from this ignominious and agonizing cross. Restore thyself to liberty, and us to our former agreeable occupation. If thou canst pro-
long

long our days, that we may enjoy the sweets of sin, instead of enduring these tortures." And alas! many, too many are they, who entertain the same sentiments in this our day. May he, who intercedes in heaven for the fallen race of Adam, open their eyes and correct their erroneous judgments! Amen. On the contrary, the penitent thief had grace to believe the words which our Lord spake before Pilate when he said " my kingdom is not of this world:" and he believed them in direct opposition to the opinion of some of the disciples themselves, even of those two, who, thinking that Christ's kingdom was merely temporal, requested to " sit, one at his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom."

Fifthly, his assurance was great: he rested entirely in him, who had no rest for himself; but hung between earth and heaven. Daniel was very composed and confident in the lion's den; but he knew that God had sent his angel to shut their mouths, and that they were so tamed as to be ready to lick the soles of his feet. And David was full of confidence in the midst of Saul's army; but he knew that the Lord preserved him. But this man, even while all circumstances seemed to conspire against him, while his breath was departing and his Lord was expiring by his side, was yet, even in this gloomy moment, full of hope, and reposed a calm and steady trust in his

redeeming God. O faith ! great was thy triumph here.

Lastly, his love was full as great as his hope. " Love," saith Solomon, " is strong as death." Cant. viii. 6. His love to Jesus was so inflamed, that he could not bear that his companion should say any thing against him, though the blessed Lamb of God himself was " dumb as a sheep, under the shearer's hands." Where are the Apostles for whom thrones are prepared in heaven? do they reprove the blaspheming thief, and put to silence his malignant tongue? No, they are all fled, and busy in hiding themselves for fear of the Jews. See how this man is honoured even above the disciples themselves. In their weakness they were left to imminent dangers : but he was established in the faith, and strengthened to stand up for Christ when all the rest had forsaken him. Our Lord said unto Peter, who was a great Apostle, if not the greatest—" whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ;" John xiii. 36. but to this man he directly saith, thou shalt follow me now : for " this day," said he, " thou shalt be with me in paradise." With what dispatch is he made meet for heaven ! how soon doth he receive a testimony of his title to paradise ! though his death treads as it were upon the heels of his conversion, yet he is not obliged to wait till death for this testimony. It is imparted to him while he is yet in the body.

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The Lord was pleased to make short work in the conversion of Paul : he was arrested in the midst of his mad career, and brought nigh when he was far from grace ; yea, when he was, in my opinion, very unfit to receive any favour, for he was, at that very time ‘ breathing out threatenings and slaughter, against the disciples of the Lord :’ armed with a commission from the high priest ; he was fill’d with rage against them, and furiously bent to rent out of the earth : but suddenly a light encompassed him ; suddenly he was struck to the ground ; suddenly he heard a voice from heaven, which quelled his rage, and tamed his fury ; so that he was now contented to be led by the hand to Damascus. When the Lord had once laid hold on him, he did not leave him, till he had fulfilled all his purposes in him. Yet some days passed between his conviction and public preaching. But this man was made both a confessor and martyr for Jesus Christ in a few hours. He preached, and his text was exceeding apposite to the place and occasion. He had no pen, ink, or paper, and if he had, his hands were bound, so that he could not use them. He was therefore under a necessity of preaching extempore, that is, off hand, or without much meditation. His sermon was not long ; but it was comprehensive, and very instructive. He touched not upon civil matters ; he did not speak evil of dignities, or concern himself with the affairs of those who were absent ; but,
without

without any circumlocution, he addressed himself point-blank to his fellow thief, saying, "dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? dost thou not fear God. Thou hast no need to fear the law: that hath almost done its worst. Thou needest not fear the Jews; they have already delivered thee up to death, and more they cannot do. But oh! the Lord can do more still. He hath power to cast thy body and soul into hell." Luke xii. 5, 6. Learn hence that all they, who are possessed of that fear, which is the beginning of wisdom, are for enforcing it upon others. They would have all men feel that, which proved so beneficial to themselves, and made the most lasting impression upon them. The godly are not for concealing the goodness of the Lord, or restraining it from others: they are not, as some affirm, for keeping all to themselves, and care not who shall sink, if they can swim; no, knowing that there is bread enough in their father's house and to spare, with the utmost importunity they intreat their relations and neighbours to come in; having relished the sweetness of a divine life in their own souls, they think they can never be too pressing in inviting others to partake of it, "Come," say they with David, "and hear, all you who fear God, and we will declare what he hath done for our souls." Psalm lxvi. 16.

But to draw towards a conclusion: we see that this man had a clear and full assurance of

of his immediate reception into bliss, or of his instant transition from a bad into a good world; yea into the best world, next to the participation of the divine essence, that omnipotence itself could bestow upon him. "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Every where else we should be left in scarcity; but here we shall have plenty. "We shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make us drink of the river of thy pleasures." Psalm xxxvi. 8. True it is, that the just receive that, which they ask not for. The thief upon the cross desires only to be remembered: and lo! paradise is promised unto him. When the crumbs from our Lord's table do here so far deprive us of our understanding, as to make us forget every thing else, even our ourselves; how shall we leap for joy, when we shall eat bread in our father's house, and drink "of that river which maketh glad the city of God." The thief was admitted into this delightful city when the evening was come, without working: what then shall they receive, who have borne the burthen and heat of the day? They two shall be admitted into paradise, and if any of them should murmur, as if they were unjustly treated, they shall soon hear that reply, and be silenced; "Friend! I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?" Mat. xx. 13. It was a peculiar privilege that this man enjoyed, in being caught up into heaven, as it were, instantaneously

neously, and on the very day of his new birth. It would have been a very precious promise to him, if he had been only informed on that day, that at the distance of a hundred years to come, he should have admittance thither, but he is favoured with immediate possession of his inheritance: "to day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Grace and glory flowed in upon him at once, and, like a full tide, impetuously carried him to the haven where he would be. It was a great mercy to have a desire excited in his soul after the enjoyment of God, but it was a far greater mercy to have that desire so speedily fulfilled. Though Joseph besought his fellow prisoner to "think on him when his head should be lifted up, and he should deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand after the former manner," Gen. xl. 14. yet he was forgotten for two years, notwithstanding any fair promises to the contrary. But this man no sooner said, "remember me!" than he was remembered, and had his request granted on the spot. O happy man! kind was the judge, whom thou didst meet with. He released thee from thy bondage, and delivered thee from thy fears in a speedy, as well as in a most affectionate manner. He also received more than he required. He only asked to be remembered, and lo! the riches of paradise were conferred upon him. This was, and continues to be, God's method of dealing with his children in every age. Abraham

asked

asked for 2 son, who might inherit his possessions: but a son was given him, from whose loins, "as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Jacob was only desirous to retain Benjamin with him: he neither sought nor expected to see Joseph; but the Lord favoured him with a sight of them both, before he died. Hannah barely requested a man child of God, but he gave her a son, who became a saint, and a prophet. Solomon petitioned for so much wisdom, as would fit him for the discharge of his office, and an understanding heart to judge his people, that he might discern between good and bad; and behold! God did unto him according to his words, and withal gave him those riches and honours without measure, which he asked not for. Hezekiah prayed for the restoration of his health, and the lengthening of his days; perhaps two years more would have contented him; but he hath the grant of fifteen years. The servant, who owed his Lord ten thousand talents, only desired longer time, "have patience with me and I will pay thee all:" But, "his Lord had compassion on him, and forgave him the whole debt." Mat. xviii. 27, &c. Well doth the church pray in the collect for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity, 'Almighty and everlasting God—who art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve.'

Last of all, we may observe that our Lord took this man with him to paradise. This is
not

not usual with men, with kings, with princes, and the great captains of the earth. It is customary with them, when they obtain any victory, or signal advantage over their foes, to select the chief of the captives, whom they may lead in triumph after them, as proofs of their success and evidences of their valour. Thus did Saul, "he spared Agag and the best of the prey". 1 Sam. xv. 9. But our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, when he spoiled principalities, and powers, led a thief with him in triumph to heaven. That, you will say, redounds but little to the honour of the conqueror, and is a very small addition to the glories of the upper world. You are much mistaken: such a conquest as this is new, singular and extraordinary: such a person as this doth, as it were, enrich and gladden the assembly of the first born. It is not the shame, but the glory of heaven, that *He*, who reigns supreme there, is both able and willing to save the vilest offenders, and to convert a notorious thief into a glorified saint.

S E R M O N III.

*The Happiness of the Godly, or
glad tidings to the mourners in
Sion.*

Romans viii. 28. *And we know that all
things work together for good, to them
that love God, to them who are the
called according to his purpose.*

AS these words are replete with the richest
treasure, and furnish the sweetest cor-
dial for the afflicted members of Jesus Christ,
I shall take this opportunity to consider them
at large, and to improve them to your spiritual
advantage. May the Lord open your eyes to
see their preciousness, and give your hearts an
actual experience of their enlivening truth!

“We know that all things,” &c. As if
the Apostle had said, ‘Over and above the
many consolations already imparted to you, I
have this to add, viz. that all things shall
work together for your good.’ Innumerable

are the comfortable declarations which the Lord hath left upon record in the sacred scriptures, for the use of his own children. There is laid up a store of consolations in reserve for them against every season of need. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Psalm xxxiv. 19. that is, he hath a deliverance in readiness adapted to every distress. "He will, with the temptation, make also a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. x. 13. Esau wept bitterly, though he was a prophane person, when he lost the blessing, and cried with a great and loud cry "bless me, even me also, O my father! hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" But we, with the holy Paul, can thank our heavenly Father, "who increaseth our consolations, in proportion as the sufferings of Christ abound in us." 2 Cor. i. 5. The treasury of his comforts can never be exhausted. He is not sparing of them to his people; but gives them "good measure, pressed down, and running over." Blessed for ever be his name for it.

"We know." The Apostle limits this knowledge to the children of God alone, and mentions it as a privilege to which the unregenerate have no pretension. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. The precious realities of Christianity are known to
none

none but to those who possess them. The pearls of this world may appear more valuable to those, who have them not : but the pearls of the elect are deemed excellent, only by those who have learned their worth from the real fruition of them. They are the "hidden manna, and the new name which no man knoweth saving he, who receiveth them." Rev. ii. 17. When we speak of spiritual joys, or mention the christian's privileges to the unrenewed part of mankind, we are unto them as barbarians, and talk a strange language or, if they chance to stumble upon the things of the spirit, and have occasion to treat of them, they are like birds, which chatter what they do not understand. A beast hath no conception of the faculties of the human mind, and is an utter stranger to the excellency of our rational enjoyments ; if it can have plenty of corn, and hay, it cares for no more. So the natural man hath no notion of the believer's refined delights, and heavenly repasts : if he can have Esau's inheritance, or the fatness of the earth, for his dwelling ; if his corn and wine increase, and he hath an undisturbed allotment in this wilderness—state : for his part, he is contented. Let who will have the righteousness, peace, and joy of the holy ghost, he envies them not. This is your condition O ye miserable worldlings ! you lie under the serpent's curse. " Upon your belly you go, and dust you eat all the days of your life." Gen. iii. 14. You have no eyes to look towards

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heaven,

heaven, no heart to seek those things which are above. Wretched beyond description is your state, and horrible must be your end, if you continue in it. Flee—instantly flee, O generation of vipers, from the wrath to come. But I can only warn you. It is the Lord that must be your deliverer. May the power of his grace be this moment felt in all your souls.

“We know.” This is the parent of spiritual courage, viz. a knowledge or firm persuasion that all things shall work together for our good. The hopes of victory embolden the soldier in the day of battle; and the prospect of a happy voyage entices the mariner to the raging waves: yet neither of these knows what the end may be. Blind to futurity, they cannot tell what will be the result of their different enterprizes. But we, who believe, do not run so uncertainly. *“We know that the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly.”* Rom. xvi. 20. Among all the sorts of men which can be named, or the various occupations which they follow, none have the like promises with believers. The Lord engages to be with them in every place. We are very apt to say, when we see any persons in circumstances, which appear to us to be desperate: may God be their stay! or may the Lord help this man or this woman! But if we consider what the Lord's help meant, we should soon see that there is no condition so forlorn, as to be beyond the reach of his assistance.

assistance. When David was greatly distressed,
 and the Amalekites had spoiled him of all his
 prosperity; "he encouraged himself in the
 Lord his God." 1 Sam. xxx. 6. At this
 time his affairs were in a critical situation.
 His prey had been taken from him. His
 flocks had been carried away. His provisions
 were all gone. His wives, his sons, and
 daughters were lost. His city was burned,
 and he had no place to dwell in. He had
 none about him but a few desperate persons,
 who were so enraged on account of their own
 losses, that they were ready to stone him.
 Yet David still "encouraged himself in the
 Lord his God." O happy David! Blessed is
 the man, who follows thy example in this
 respect. Well, how did his affairs turn out
 at last? David recovered all: there was no-
 thing lacking to him, neither small, nor
 great, neither sons, nor daughters, neither
 spoil, nor any thing that had been taken from
 him." 1 Sam. xxx. 19. Learn we from
 hence, that when the believer hath lost all
 his worldly goods, he hath a God to go unto.
 To him he may pour out his complaints;
 from him he may expect redress; and while
 he can approach him as his God, he cannot
 be wretched. Nay, under his greatest losses
 and distresses, he hath a promise, that all
 shall be restored to him, that is needful for
 him; and that his real benefit is, in the se-
 verest trials, consulted and advanced. Sin-
 ners do not triumph over the people of God,

when they are at the worst, and reduced as low as your pride, or malice could wish; still they have a covenant God, unto whom they may draw near. Though they may be destitute of all earthly comforts, and the world should ride over their heads, yet rejoice not, O enemies. "Though they fall, they shall yet arise." Mic. viii. 8. When they are in the utmost straits, God is their refuge; and a very present help he is in trouble. His presence goes with them. Wherever they are scattered, they cannot be scattered from their Lord. He saith unto every true Israelite, "I will go with thee and give thee rest." Exod. xxxii. 14. But to what end will he go with them? To lead and direct them. "Them who are meek, shall he guide in judgment; and such, as are gentle, shall he learn his way." Psalm xxv. 9. He will "lead them forth by the right way, that they may go to a city of habitation." Ps. cvii. 7. He conducts them principally by his word; which is a "lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their paths." Psalm cxix. 105. Sometimes his providence takes the lead, shuts up every cross road, and leaves the straight road alone open. Hos. ii. 6. They are never altogether without comfort, when they can behold the way plain before them. Doubts *about* the road are far more perplexing and distressful than the dangers which assault them *upon* the road. Do you meet with bears and lions in the king's highway of holiness? You have cause to bless God

God that it is there you do meet with them. It would have been death unto you if you had met with them any where else. He will go with them to conceal and secure them in their march. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Psalm xxxi. 30. "Thou art their hiding place: thou shalt preserve them from trouble." Psalm xxxii. 7. O the security of the saints! Their head is latent, though their heels are visible, and often bruised. Moses well knew the worth of God's presence, when he said, "if thou wilt not go with us, carry us not up hence." Exod. xxxiii. 15. These words carry great weight with them, when we consider that the children of Israel were, at the time they were spoken, in the wilderness, amidst fierce beasts and poisonous animals, and entangled with thorns and briars. They were on a troublesome journey, and encompassed with many difficulties; yet the Lord was in the midst of them leading them to Canaan—a delightful land flowing with milk and honey. Now Moses chose rather to abide in that wilderness with his God, than go to Canaan, however pleasant or rich a country it might be, and leave the Lord behind him. "But," saith he, "if thy presence will go with us, we will go. Grant me this request and I am contented to proceed in what way, and to what place soever thou wilt have me go. Though I should be obliged to pass

pass through the tabernacles of the Edomites, Ishmaelites, Moabites, and Amalekites; or to steer my course through the midst of the hosts of the Anakims or Zamzummims; I care not where; provided thou art with me. Thy absence would render Canaan itself more dreary, and desolate than this barren desert. If thy presence therefore go not with me, I shall not up hence." This endearing presence of God is the portion of all his saints; and a rich and a widely extensive portion it is. "It makes all things work together for their good." What things? every providential occurrence, every accident whatever, every hardship and distress, every cross and disappointment. "If God be for us who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. none. Even they, whom we deem to be against us, shall be for us. "Mel have you bereaved of my children," said Jacob; "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not: all these things are against me." Gen. xlii. 36. Yet, old as he was, he lived long enough to see that all these things were for him: for he never had the like comfort from his sons as he experienced after this period. To find again that which was supposed to be lost, affords the most exquisite joy; especially if it be a thing upon which the heart is much set, or whose loss hath been sorely regretted. "All things work together for good." Whoever thoroughly believes this sentence may set his feet upon the neck of his dangers, as well as of his fears; and soon perceive the truth

truth of Sampson's riddle, viz. that, "out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness." Judges xiv. 14. We have a remarkable instance of all things working together for the good of those who love God in the history of Joseph. How many instruments from time to time had a hand in his promotion? His father sent him to Dothan to visit his brethren; they conspired to slay him. Reuben rescued him. They cast him into a pit. Judah released him. They sold him to the Ishmaelites, and these to Potiphar, his mistress falsely accused him, and his master imprisoned him: The chief butler, after having long forgotten him, recommended him to Pharaoh. Pharaoh took him out of prison, and made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. O how many means are here used! how many men are employed to exalt this poor unknown youth! None of them saw God's design towards him; yet he made them all, contrary to their intention, to co-operate with his counsel, and contribute their share towards the advancement of Joseph.

What things are they which work together for good? All things. First, all the works of God. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy, and truth unto such as keep his covenant, and his testimonies." Psalm xxv. 10. Observe what he says. Do not you contract what he hath enlarged. All! he excepts not one thing. Be then confirmed in the faith: give

give glory to God, and resolve with Job, "though he slay you to trust in him." Job xiii. 15. The Almighty may seem for a season to be your enemy, in order that he may become your eternal friend. You must, O believers, after all your tribulations, and anguish, conclude with the psalmist—"it is good for us that we have been afflicted, that we might learn thy statutes." Psalm cxix. 71. Under all your disquietudes you must exclaim "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom xi. 33. His glory is clearly seen when he works by means; it is still more apparent when he brings his purposes to pass without means; but it shines most brilliant when he accomplishes them in opposition to means. To open the eyes of the blind was a wonderful act; it was still more wonderful to open them by the application of spittle and clay—ingredients more likely to destroy the sight, than to restore it in the opinion of some. "A horror of great darkness fell upon Abram" Gen. xv. 12. at the time, when God intended to communicate unto him the greatest light. He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh and lamed him, when he purposed to bless him. Gen. xxxii. 25. He struck Paul with blindness when he condescended to unclothe the eyes of his soul. He kept the woman of Canaan back for a while; but afterwards she obtained her suit. Behold then "all
God's

God's ways are mercy ;" and " all things work together for the good of those who love him."

Secondly, afflictions of various kinds, are the avenues through which the faithful are conducted to the possession of that which is good. By the cross is the way to the crown. " Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God." Acts xiv. 22. Thou broughtest us to the net: thou laidest affliction upon our loins: thou hast caused men to ride over our heads: we went through fire, and water; and thou hast brought us to a wealthy place." Psalm lxvi. 11, 12. Here we see that the road to victory is along the dusky plain of sorrow and dismay; that falling into the net leads to liberty; and that the boasting of their enemies is the deliverance of the saints. While their adversaries cry out, " they are ensnared: our feet are on their necks; if this be the way to life, they shall remain in it long enough: let them arise, and disentangle themselves if they can;" the Lord confounds their devices and brings his people into a wealthy place. The high road of the proud is sure to terminate in the dust, and the dusty track of the humble is sure to end in honour. When Israel journey to Canaan, they must take the brick kilns, the red sea, and the wilderness in their way. And is it likely that they, who are to pass through so many intervening obstacles, shall not be retarded in their progress, or exercised with many

many trials? Let us be satisfied with the providences of God and coincide with them. They “ work together for good to them who love him.”

Thirdly, every affliction is very useful and profitable to the godly. The prodigal son had no thoughts of returning to his father's house, till he had been humbled by adversity. Hagar was haughty under Abram's roof, and her mistress was despised in her eyes; but in the wilderness she was meek and lowly. Jonah sleeps in the ship, but in the whale's belly he watches, and prays. Manasseh lived as a *libertine* in Jerusalem, and committed the most enormous crimes; but when he was bound with chains in the prison at Babylon, his heart was turned to seek the Lord his God. Bodily pains and diseases have been instrumental to arouse many to enquire after the Lord Jesus, when those, who were in high health, have given themselves no concern about him. That ground, which is not rent and torn with the plough, bears nothing but thistles and thorns—the fruits of the curse: but when it is sowed, and well manured, it “ brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed.” Heb. vi. 7. The vines will run wild in process of time, if they be not pruned and trimmed. So would our wild hearts be over run with filthy, and poisonous weeds, if the dear Jesus, the true vine-dresser, did not often check their growth by crosses and sanctified troubles. “ It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his

his youth." Lament. iii. 27. Our Saviour saith, "every branch, that beareth fruit, my Father purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit." John xv. 22. There can be no gold or silver finely wrought without being first purified with fire; no elegant houses built of stones till the hammers have squared and smoothed them. So we can neither become vessels of honour in the house of our Father, till we are melted in the furnace of affliction, nor lively stones in the walls of the new Jerusalem, till the hand of the Lord hath beaten off our proud excrescences, and empty tumours with his own hammers. But the ungodly are for the most part, putrifying in their prosperity, and, like dead standing water, breed many kinds of ugly and venomous worms—"Because they have no changes they fear not." Psalm lv. 19. "Moab hath been at ease from his youth; and he hath settled on his lees; he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel; neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed." Jer. xlviii. 13. O Lord our God! rather than that this savour of the body of death should rest upon us, or that we should live without fear of thy blessed name, and be still knit to our sins; empty us, O our heavenly Father! from vessel to vessel! let thy kind hand be upon us, to awaken us! purify us with fire! smite us with a rod! Yet—at the same time, remember, gracious God, thy promise to the son of David—"I

will chasten him with the rod of man: but—
my mercy shall not depart from him." 2 Sam.
vii. 14, 15, *mi bna mibbav' t'nov y'nois*

Fourthly, it is not said that all things *shall*,
but that all things *do* work together for good.
The business is on the wheel, and every wheel
is in motion for you. Not only the angels who
are your body guards, and the saints who pray
without ceasing for you; but your very ene-
mies; yea, the old dragon, and all his emissa-
ries are ministering to your profit. It is true
that they have no such thought. This is not
their aim. No, they imagine that they are
executing their own devilish schemes, calcu-
lated for your destruction: as it is said of that
Assyrian "whom the Lord sent to punish an
hypocritical nation, and to purge the wheat
from the chaff: howbeit he meaneth not so;
saith the Lord; neither doth his heart think so.
But though he hath no such views, yet he is
only carrying on my designs." Isaiah x. 6, 7.
All the seeming accidents, observable in the
world; subserve the same end, and center in
one point. They tend to promote the glory
of the Father, and the salvation of the chil-
dren. Every sickness, and infirmity, which
are laid upon you, every loss that you sustain,
every reproach that you suffer, every scorn
that reddens your cheeks, and every grief that
saddens your hearts, every pain and torture
which rend your bowels, and every ach in
your bones are intended for your good. Every
alteration in your circumstances, your foul and
fair

fair weather, your cloudy and sunshiny days, your ebbings and flowings, your plenty and scarcity, your freedom and imprisonment, your health and sickness, your life and death, do all work together for your good. O Christians! see what a harvest of blessedness springs from this text. The seed is sown, and in the blade, the young foxes are restrained from devouring it Cant. ii. 15. the Lord is at work, the whole creation is employed, men and angels, friends and foes, are all engaged in promoting its growth, fencing its bounds, and ripening its produce. O dear, dear Jesus! what didst thou see in us that could move thee to do such great things for us? what could induce thee to make such a train of attendants so busily occupied in our service, and working together for our good? Oh! it was thy amazing love. It was thy compassion which knows neither measure nor end.

Suffer me in this place to speak a word to the ungodly. O sinners! what do you mean by persecuting the people of God? if you purpose to smother, or cool that spark of fire, which the Lord hath enkindled in their hearts; your purposes will never succeed. It may be blown into a flame, but it cannot be extinguished. It is fire from heaven; and the more the rain descends upon it, the more it will blaze. You take the best course to keep them in God's ways. The heat of the sun will sooner strip the pilgrim of his vest, than the frost and snow. Let them alone: the spirit of God in them is

more than a match for hell and all its black battalions. These stars shine brightest when the night is darkest; when you do your worst to them, they fare best. Your most malignant devices are productive to them of the greatest good; and though they have no reason to be under any obligations to you for your intended mischief, yet they must, and will thank God for over-ruling your infernal projects, and converting them to their real benefit. If you would have them be, such as you are, all your attempts are lost labour. You may as well sit still, and let your hearts at rest. Your malice is as weak to force them to it as your virtues are to allure them. Your faces are too horrible to conciliate their esteem, and your rage is too impotent to excite their fear. God himself hath said, "they shall not be afraid of evil-tidings; their hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord." Psalm cxii. 7.

Fifthly, all believers will have reason at last to say, with Joseph, of every bitter and fiery trial, that befalls them, through the enmity of the world and satan, "you thought evil against us, but God meant it unto good." The whole word of God, like a cloud of witnesses, vindicates and illustrates this great truth. Take one example in the room of many which might be produced. When David went out to war against Israel, and joined his forces to those of Achish king of Gath, with whom he had taken refuge, and secreted himself from Saul: the princes of the Philistines

Philistines commanded him to return. And this they did with a view to disgrace him, because they were jealous of him, and envied his growing fame. But the Lord turned their spite to David's advantage. Had he gone out to battle, he would have been guilty of shedding his brethren's blood, and might have rendered their overthrow more fatal and destructive. Saul too and Jonathan, who lost their lives in that war, might have fallen by his hands. In infinite mercy therefore he was kept back, and delivered both from the danger of giving offence to the Lord's anointed, and from the slaughter of any of his people. He did not go out against them. And the Philistines could not blame him for returning because it was at their command that he did return. See how circumstances concurred to make that act of his enemies which was contrived to compleat his disgrace, and to hasten his entire ruin, work together for his good. O who would not trust the Lord! who ever followed his guidance, and was confounded? When he is pleased to permit the ungodly to kill the bodies of his servants, this is all that they can do: and this is only like stripping Joseph of his party-coloured coat, or rinding his garment from him. Gen xxxix. 12. Small is his detriment who loses his cloaths, and escapes with a whole skin. So when the christian is wounded unto death, his soul remains unhurt. He hath preserved all, that he wished to preserve. He knows full well

that his body was but a corruptible raiment, which would have soon withered and decayed of itself, had none helped to tear it: and therefore he is not greatly moved at any violence offered to it. On the contrary, when it seemeth good in the sight of the Lord to better the condition of his people, his providences walk hand in hand with his purposes: as when he was for bringing Israel to sojourn in Egypt, he caused a mighty famine to arise in the land of Canaan, while in Egypt there was a great abundance of corn through the contrivance of Joseph, whom he had before dispatched thither for this very end. And when the time of transplanting them from Egypt to Canaan, drew nigh, he raised a new king in Egypt, who knew not Joseph, and so turned the hearts of the Egyptians against the Israelites, that they oppressed them sorely, and to their bondage added the severest cruelties. All these instances have a tendency to increase our faith; and should fully establish our confidence that the Lord will "make all things work together for the good of his church." "Though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof; yet there is a river, whose streams shall make glad the city of God." Psalm xlv. 2, 3, 4. Yea, though her nursing fathers and nursing mothers should reject and forsake her; yet salvation would come to her from another quarter.

quarter. Hence Mordecai said unto Esther — "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time; then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place: but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth, whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esth. iv. 14. The king of heaven may, for a short season, lodge the chain of bondage in the hands of the Philistines, that he may humble Israel for their sins: but it shall not long remain there. The Lord will hear the cries of his people, and set them at liberty, that "with joy they may draw water out of the wells of salvation!" Isaiah xlii. 3. for great is the holy one of Israel in the midst of them.

But who are they for whom he thus interests himself? who are the persons for whose good all things co-operate? "those who love God, and are called according to his purpose." They are such as have been "chosen in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love." They are such as have been "called out of darkness into marvellous light, and translated from the kingdom of satan into the kingdom of God's dear son." They have been convinced of sin. They have been driven by necessity to the Lord Jesus Christ. They have been enabled to believe in him, and have "received redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of

of

of sins." The "love of God hath been shed abroad in their hearts by the holy ghost." They are a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, who shew forth the praises of him, who loved them with an everlasting love, and called them according to his purpose." These are the happy people, who are highly favoured of the Lord: these are they, whose good is consulted in every dispensation of his providence, and in every purpose of his grace.

Many things verify this. 1st. The testimony of the holy Ghost by the mouths of his saints. David saith, "I was dumb: I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Psalm xxxix. 9. And Eli as piously and humbly acquiesces in the divine will when he declares—"it is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." 1 Sam. iii. 18. Job likewise under the most distressful circumstances, thus expresses himself—"the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." Job i. 21. Here we see that believers are not only patient under tribulations and sufferings, but thankful for them—thankful to God, not only for his mercies but also for his judgments. Job doth not say, "the Lord gave, hath enriched me, hath gladdened me, hath built me up, and fortified me on every side: blessed be his name." No not altogether so: but "he hath also taken away, he hath bowed me, he hath broken me, he hath stripped me, and made me so bare, that

that I have nothing left of all that I possessed: blessed for ever be his name."

Secondly, the experiences of the saints prove the same truth. When they feel the hand of God upon them, they feel the other underneath them at the same time. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Deut. xxxiii. 27. As the gospel allots many trials to the godly, so it administers to them many great and strong supports. God is their refuge, even the mighty God who is the rock of ages. They have a faithful and merciful high priest, who "was tempted that he might be able to succour them, who are tempted." Heb. ii. 18. They have "exceeding great and precious promises." 2. Pet. i. 4. They have gracious experiences." Rom. v. 4. Patience worketh experience. O beloved souls! you know not your strength, till you have tried it. When your enemies do most vigorously beset you; you shall then see that greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world; yea, as the prophet saith, "that they, who are with you, are more than they who are against you." Hezekiah never had such a relish of his upright walking, and sincere intention, as when he received the message of his death. Isaiah xxxviii. 3. Stephen never had such a view of heaven, as when the stones flew like hail about his head. Acts vii. 56. Indeed the company of Jesus is at all times desirable; but in the hour of danger it is doubly sweet. When the Lord meets his people in prison or in the wilderness, "he speaks comfortably unto them." Hos. ii. 14.

This

This is one of their chief supports under difficulties, and the cordial which enlivens them under the multitude of their crosses. Be you therefore patient, my brethern, unto the end. You will have need of patience until the coming of our Lord. No reasonable excuse can be assigned for impatience and fretfulness. Your sufferings as Christians, demand for patience, and the motives, with which the gospel enforces this grace, condemn your want of it. Seeing it is God, who corrects you, why should you repine at his corrections? The efficacy of grace can never be so clearly seen as in the dark night of adversity, or under a violent struggle with the powers of hell. Great strength of body and constitution is discovered, when a man can bear heat and cold, or live in any climate without impairing his health. The metal of a sword is judged to be well tempered, when iron cannot blunt its edge. So the grace of God, ingrafted in the heart, is such a plant as neither the tares of the field nor the thorns of the brake can stifle or choke: strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, it can endure not only the scorching heat of summer, but the shivering frost of winter. Let all, who have eyes to see, perceive that your grace is a plant of this right sort, that it is the true seed, "the seed of God." *John iii. 9.* Let it maintain its ground against the smiles and frowns, the allurements and discouragements of the world. Let not your light be blown

out by the storms of temptation. Let not the waters, which may rush upon you from the mouth of the great deep, so much as cool your zeal: and especially beware, lest the tail of the old dragon should even be likely to disorder your ranks, or to sweep you down from your orbits with the wandering stars. Be steadfast in your profession. Be well acquainted with the real state of your souls. As some may think themselves to be something when they are nothing; so some may seem to come short, who are "entering into rest." Heb. iv. 1. Be therefore well established in the truth, and fully persuaded in your minds. You know the world that you are in, and have no need to be informed, that it is the seat of vanity, and the fostering nest of vexation. You are not ignorant of the old quarrel between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; and that it hath been carried on through every age to this day. You are aware of the mark at which Satan and all his archers aim their shafts. It is at the white stone in your bosoms, and the white robe on your backs; it is at your conscience void of offence, and your holy life, and conversation, that all the mad and raging fury of earth and hell is levelled. "Now be strong in the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. ii. 1. to withstand the united efforts of this formidable league against you. Let the devil see that you will be holy whether he be willing or unwilling. Let the wicked world be convinced that

that you are resolved to " follow the Lord wholly," in spite of all their opposition, and to " live godly in Christ Jesus" whatever the persecutions which they may stir up against you. They may, if they are permitted, strip you of your possessions, wound you in your names, and embitter, if they cannot shorten your days, yet they must ever despair of touching you in your nearest and dearest interest, or of being able to " separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Oh! let all their malice be only a spur to what you do. Suffer not the sun to fade your flowers, but to ripen your fruits. Let your spark be kindled into a fervent flame, and let your grain of mustard seed grow into a wide spreading tree. Let your grace correspond in nature with the waters of the sanctuary. Ezek. xlvii. 3, 4, 5. As these rose in height from the ankles to the knees, and from the knees to the loins, till they at length became deep enough to swim in; so let your graces be multiplied, till you come to the " fullness of the stature of Christ." Perhaps they may be weak at first and hardly sufficient to keep us from sinking under your burthens. O let a sense of their weakness drive you near unto God. Pray that the use of every means of grace may, like so many additional brooks, swell your stock, till your little stream becomes a river, and your river as Jordan, which, in the time of harvest, overflows its banks. " Let your path be as the shining

shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. O may this scripture be fulfilled in you. May your "lips drop with honey-comb, and your fingers with sweet smelling myrrhe!" Cant. iv. 11. and v. 5. As you have imbibed the milk and honey which descend from above, so let them drop in the way as you go, and distill upon others. You know that the ungodly, who drink iniquity like water, taint the air which they breathe, and corrupt the morals of those with whom they converse. Like persons infected with the plague, they leave an infection behind them in every place. Their mouths utter falsehoods, oaths, reproaches, frothy talk, and idle tales. But do you, who have been fed with the dew of heaven, enrich the track that you take: distribute honey-comb from your lips, and myrrhe from your fingers; that is, let your speech be always wholesome, seasoned with salt, Col. iv. 6. that you may minister grace to your hearers, and bring forth work meet for repentance, that "men seeing your good works may glorify your father which is in heaven." Matt. v. 16. Be tender to all. Forgive your enemies, pity the unconverted.

Knowing the destruction and misery which are in their way, try to win them over to the Lord by your kind reproofs, and gentle persuasions. Remember how long the Lord waited to be gracious unto many of you. And had he dealt with you according to your just

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S E R M O N IV.

The Superiority of the Lowly over the Proud, displayed!

Jude ix. *Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said—The Lord rebuke thee.*

THE Apostle, having uttered his complaints against those “filthy dreamers, who despised dominion and spake evil of dignities,” that is, against such as contumeliously treated, and lightly esteemed those great luminaries, which the Lord had raised in his church, doth, in this verse, set their supercilious and arrogant conduct towards good men in contrast with the meek and gentle demeanour of Michael the archangel towards the devil. And from his reasoning, the following conclusions may be justly inferred: if Michael, who was by nature so excellent, and by office

so highly exalted, when he was disputing with the devil, a wicked and impure spirit, already adjudged by the Lord, treats him with so much good temper and moderation; how dare they, who are such mean and ignoble creatures, treat with contempt and insolence those persons, who are placed in eminent stations, and are invested with sovereign power? If he, when engaged in a good cause, and knowing the Lord's mind concerning it, refrained himself from every bitter or angry expression, even when he was contending about the body of Moses; how dare they give vent to their rage, and speak evil of those things with which they are utterly unacquainted? If the disposition of the archangel was such, that he durst not bring a railing accusation, and his holiness would not permit him to urge the most righteous charges against the very devil himself, how dare they bellow out their curses and unjust censures against their superiors without fear? If he committed the decision of his cause wholly into God's hands, and only said — "The Lord rebuke thee;" how dare they be their own avengers and appropriate the right of judgment to themselves? The sum of the whole is this; if an angel, of such transcendent worth and princely dignity, was sparing of his reproaches against the worst of beings in a justifiable contest, doubtless they are more audaciously impertinent, who presume to revile those whom God hath put in authority either in church or state.

Having

Having thus shewn the apostolic mode of arguing in my text, I proceed now to consider the words more particularly, and to draw from them such lessons of instruction as may, under the influence of divine grace, not only inform your understandings but improve your hearts. The word "Michael" implies, who is like to God? But the learned disagree in their sentiments about this exalted personage. Some suppose him to be the second person in the ever blessed Trinity; others maintain that he is a created being of the highest order or an angel of the first rank, whose station is near the throne of God, where he stands ready to receive and execute his Maker's supreme commands. And this latter opinion seems to be strongly confirmed, if it be not fully established, by that passage in Daniel, chap. x. 13. where he is stiled "one of the chief princes." As Belzebub is said to be chief of the devils, so Michael is judged to be the chief of the Angels. Rev. xii. 7.

The word "devil" signifies accuser or slanderer. And he hath been so called, because he originally accused or slandered God in paradise, as being averse from the increase of man's knowledge, and happiness. The first thing, that he did upon earth in his new capacity, or after he had been transformed into a fiend of darkness, was to accuse the Lord of falsehood and envy—of falsehood, in asserting that death should certainly be the consequence of eating the forbidden fruit, and of envy in

debarring his creatures from so innocent an enjoyment. "Yes, he is afraid that you should taste of this fruit, lest you should become like unto him: for he doth know, that in the day you eat thereof your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." Gen. iii. 5. And he still persists to slander God by his false and blasphemous suggestions. Sometimes he slanders his justice, as if sin was not hateful in his sight, but that he connives at it, and will not inflict that punishment on sinners which he hath denounced. Thus he leads them on to presumption, and from presumption the descent is easy to the nethermost hell. At other times, he represents God as inexorably just, or utterly devoid of mercy, and so persuades those who are humbled under a sense of guilt, that their sins are greater than can be forgiven, as Cain said. So Satan is desirous to cut off those, whom God intends only to bend: where God lays his finger he would be glad to lay his toms. Frequently doth he suggest that God in his providence, hath no regard to his creatures. He insists upon it that the good are miserable, and that the wicked are happy. By these insinuations he entices some to pilfer and steal, and prevails with others to live by the length and strength of their teeth, like the fishes of the sea, among whom it is common for the greatest to prey upon the least. Alas! how subtile are his devices! how difficult is it to know them or to guard against them!

Farther.

Father. He may be called devil, because he accuses man before God as it is said, Rev. xii. 10. "the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night." He accused Joshua the high priest, and stood at his right hand to resist him. Zech. iii. 1, 2, 3. He charged Job with being a merchant and not a saint; that he was not influenced by love, but by the prospect of gain to serve the Lord; and that if his wages were once withdrawn, he would be slack and remiss in his service. Oh! what a depth of malice is here! But he attempts *that* which he, with all his malicious art, can never accomplish, and that is, to condemn those whom the Lord hath acquitted. He will sling his darts towards them, though he cannot reach them. He will spit his venom at them, but it will recoil upon himself. He accuses the saints before him who sees through the baseness and injustice of his accusations; yea, before him who will accuse the accuser and pity the accused. Zech. iii. 5. Again, he may be called devil, because he slanders one man to another. Sometimes he will slander the godly to the godly, and raise a suspicion or jealousy among themselves. Thus he slandered honest Mephibosheth to David. But most commonly he slanders the righteous to the wicked. Some accused Joseph of incontinency, Elijah of troubling Israel, and our Lord of being an enemy to Caesar, which is the same thing as if he had affirmed that the sun was an orb of dark-

darkness or a globe of ice. Let none of you then be troubled at his misrepresentations: slander, like black soap may sully your characters at first, but afterwards it will whiten them, and leave not a speck behind it. The bright sun of your good name shall break out gloriously from the dark cloud of spite and malevolence. "The Lord shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon day." Psalm xxxvii. 6. The tongues of the ungodly are but as besoms to sweep off the dust which is ready to cleave to the graces of the saints. Satan is a declared enemy against Christ and holiness. Christ is beyond his reach, and therefore he throws his dirt at those whom he perceives to resemble Christ most. These he delights to worry by the way, though he cannot prevent them from arriving in due season, at their journey's end. He will make free with their reputation, if he cannot touch their souls. The tongues of the ungodly are as it were, suspended to his girdle, and he saith to one go, and he goeth; to another come, and he cometh; and to his servant do this, and he doeth it."

Finally, he may be called devil because he is a deceiver, and often leads a man to deceive himself. Every deceit is both hateful and hazardous: but self deceit is the most hazardous of any that can be named. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." James i. 22. The Syrians fancied that they were going to Dathan, while

while they were in full march to Samaria. 2 Kings vi. 19, 20. And there are thousands still who walk in the high road to hell, who will not be persuaded but that they are in the strait path to heaven. Oh! how various are the shifts and evasions, to which men have recourse in order to justify themselves in their wickedness, and to keep the curse, to which it exposes them, out of sight. They look upon their own sins as small: why? because they love them. They count the least sins in others great, because they hate them.

Now from the behaviour of Michael, as recorded in my text, we may learn, first, that the higher we are exalted, the more humble we should be. Humility is an angelic grace. No creature is above the archangel, and no creature is so lowly as he. The highest is the humblest. None are viler than the devil, and yet none are prouder than he. He would have tempted Christ to worship him: Mat. iv. 9. but the archangel would worship Christ. Humility is the ornament and glory of the angels: pride is the deformity and disgrace of devils. If heaven cannot contain a proud angel, it will not receive a proud soul. In every high condition may we watch and pray, that our minds be not as high as our condition! But alas! the rich make a god of their riches. The moralists extol their own righteousnesses, and rely upon their personal merits. The wise set up their reasonings, and idolize them. How justly might God crush

all these in an instant, and reduce them, against their will, to the lowest pitch of meanness, though they are so fond of exalting themselves, and say—" Lords are we: we will not come unto thee, or have thee to rule over us ?" These are thieves and robbers: they will not acknowledge that the Lord Jesus is the author and giver of every good. " What hast thou," saith the apostle, " that thou didst not receive." 1 Cor. iv. 7. If thou art but a receiver, return the honour to the right owner. " Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name be the glory." Psalm cxv. 1. Every faithful servant will deposit the money, which he receives for his master's goods, in his master's *till*. Do thou too as Joab did when he was besieging the royal city of Rabbah, 2 Sam. xii. 27, 28. He sent word to David and said, " gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it, lest I take the city, and it be called after my name." Why? where would have been the harm, if he had taken it himself? Oh! he well knew how jealous kings are of their honour. David had well nigh lost his head through Saul's jealousy, only because the women, as they played and sang, ascribed more renown to David than to Saul: and this jealousy stuck to him to his dying day. And is not the King of Kings much more jealous of his honour? will he " give his praise to graven images?" May we all pray that we may be kept from being proud of what we have

have received. I have read of a bird whose feathers are so light, that he is obliged to carry a stone in his bill lest the wind should blow him away. Be this as it may: it is certain that we do all stand in need of a stone, or rather, of the rock out of which we were hewn, lest the whirlwind of pride should catch us up hastily, and carry us where we shall be no more seen.

From the archangel's guarding the body of Moses, we learn that the service of God is the glory of the most dignified angel. In what a contemptible light would Michael have beheld himself, if he had been denied the favour of executing his Lord's commands. He is by nature a spirit, and by office an angel, that is a messenger: and some observe that angels are oftener prescribed by their offices, than by their nature, as if they delighted more in obedience, than in existence, or would rather not *be* than not be *employed* in serving God. The emperor Theodosius used to reckon this his chief title, viz. * *ultimus dei servus*, the lowest servant of Jesus Christ. The service of God is man's most honourable distinction: nothing else can make him great. St. Paul attests this truth, where he saith, "I have laboured more than they all." 1 Cor. xv. 10. He doth not say, I have reigned or conquered more than any of the other apostles: no, but "I have laboured:" what labour? was it to preach the gospel, to plant churches, and to set them in order, or to do some extraordinary

traordinary feat of the like import. No, but he laboured in the meanest offices most abundantly, "in stripes, in prisons, in journeyings, in perils, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, &c." 2 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25, &c. Many deem the king's tax to be the chief appendage of royalty, and a rich benefice or lawn sleeves to be the pinnacle of honour among the clergy: but if we could consult the archangel about this matter, he would tell us, that is neither the one nor the other, but that to be a servant to, and a messenger for Jesus Christ, is the highest dignity that any created being can aspire unto. Oh! how mean and insignificant is man, though cloathed in scarlet, purple, and gold, yea though his temples be encircled with a crown, if he is not the servant of Jesus Christ. What is he but an impure spirit in clean cloaths, a devil clad in Samuel's mantle, yea, the devil himself gilded over! Preferable, far preferable to such, are the servants of Christ even in rags. The lowest of these are good spirits in a mean attire, angels *in embryo*, or angels not yet admitted into the heavenly world.

From a view of the meek and gentle deportment of the archangel, the apostle takes an opportunity, thirdly, to arraign and condemn the haughtiness of those deceivers, who were placed in a much inferior rank. Pride is much more intolerable in a poor than in a rich person; because he hath not equal temptation to be proud. It is a convincing proof that

that the heart hath a strong bias that way, to which it leans without force or constraint. The necessities and indigence of the poor ought to keep them humble. We expect the fire to be soon extinguished when the fuel is entirely removed from it. How then can they be proud, who have neither gifts nor graces, neither virtues nor any good to which they can lay a claim ! As it becomes the rich to be thankful, so it appertains to the poor to be humble. With small means a high mind doth not agree. " Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Prov. xvi. 19. Poverty and pride are the most unfuitable match in the world. Pride is odious in all, but it is monstrous in the poor. In order therefore to bring down your proud stomachs, cast an eye upon those whom God hath set above you ; and you will generally see that they are much more lowly than you ; or that the highest are the humblest. When the sun is at the highest, its shadows are the shortest. So the children of God possess humble minds in exalted stations. James i. 10. They have been humbled, though they are rich. Say then to thyself, ' if these, in the height of their wealth, honour, gifts, and enjoyments, are humble ; why should I be puffed up, who have not their temptations to be so ? I am not so powerfully beset as they are with the allurements and blandishments of an opulent state.' Say once more, ' if the judgments of the Lord

overtake great men for their pride, what will become of me? It is more abominable in me than in them. "If the Lord will destroy the height of the cedars, certainly the reed ought to tremble." Amos ii. 9. We may often observe those, who are destitute even of common sense, and have neither skill nor knowledge,—neither illustrious names, nor high descent to boast of, swollen with pride, and filled with the bitterest enmity against God's children. David saith, "the very abjects are gathered together against me. I am the song of the drunkards." Psalm xxxv. 15. But the Lord hath rebuked even kings for the sake of his people: and shall he not visit the drunkards for these things? will he not pour contempt on these snarling lumps of clay, who are no better than a quagmire, or a compound of mud and water. If the great men quake, shall these dregs of the earth remain undismayed? "Blessed is he, who watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

From the archangels contending with the devil, about the body of Moses, we may learn, fourthly, that there is a contest between good and bad angels concerning both temporal and spiritual matters. They contend about the safety of the saints in this world. Good angels, like a troop of armed soldiers 'encamp round about them and deliver them.' Satan too, with his battalions, seeks to devour them, or to precipitate them into the most dangerous

ous situations, as he would fain have persuaded the Saviour of the world to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. But good angels keep them in all their ways. These "bear them up in their hands, lest at any time they should dash their foot against a stone." Psalm xci. 11, 12. When Elisha was surrounded by his enemies, the mountain, on which he stood, was full of horses and chariots of fire." 2 Kings vi. 17. When the devil stirred up Daniel's adversaries to meditate his death and to cast him into the lions den; a good angel interposed and shut the lions mouths. Dan. vi. 22. Good angels rescued Jacob from the rage of his brother Esau. Gen. xxxii. 2. Michael, their chief, delivered the Jews from the cruelty of the Persians: Dan. x. 13. and when Jezebel sought the life of Elijah, an angel fed him, and ministered unto him. 1 Kings xix. 5. But to destroy and not to save men is the whole aim of the infernal hosts. When Satan tempted David to number the people, he struck off seventy thousand men at one blow from his list. 2 Sam. xxiv. 15.

Nor is this contest wholly confined to temporal, but extends itself to spiritual concerns. Hence it was that when satan would have defamed Mary, while the Son of God was yet in her womb, and Joseph was actually "minded to put her away privily, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph thou son of David, fear not

to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that, which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Matt. i. 19. 20 The evil angel would slay the babe in his infancy, but the good angels sang and glorified God on the day of his birth : and one of them warned Joseph to carry the young child into Egypt, that he might be preserved from the cruelty of bloody Herod. The devil tempted Jesus, but " angels came and ministered unto him." The contest between good and bad angels was kept up with unremitting ardour, during the Messiah's whole life upon earth, and it is equally fierce with respect to his church, and still maintained. The good angels rejoice at the spreading and enlargement of his kingdom, and exult at the conversion of one sinner to him. It is their delight to attend public ordinances. They desire to pry into the mysteries of the gospel. Through their ministration the law was given. An angel directed Cornelius to send for Peter. An angel led Philip to instruct the eunuch. An angel invited Paul into Macedonia, which was the means of forwarding many souls towards heaven. An angel stood in the way of Balaam, when he went to curse Israel. " Michael and his angels fought for the church against the dragon and his angels." Rev. xii. 7. But the evil angel is the old and inveterate enemy of souls. It is his greatest pleasure to annoy and distress them. He encouraged Jannes and Jambres to withstand Moses. He became a lying spirit in the

the mouth of Baal's prophets. He sowed tares in that field where good seed had been sown. "Every false doctrine is a doctrine of devils." 1 Tim. iv. 1. "He hindered Paul once and again from going to confirm the Thessalonians in the faith." 1 Thess. ii. 18. "He cast some into prison" Rev. ii. 10. that they might be tried, and hath been practising all his wiles in every age to bring the religion of the gospel into disrepute. There is a standing opposition between Christ and the devil—between sin and holiness in every place. It soars higher than man: it reaches even to angels. It is within between man and himself: it is without between men and men—between men and angels—between God and both. Holiness and sin are incompatible: they can never be reconciled. Holiness cannot endure sin, and sin hates the very sight of holiness. A saint dislikes the society of the sinner, and a sinner cannot bear the saint as such. They may have a natural affection for one another: but the sin of the one cannot love the grace of the other, and grace will desert sin wherever it appears. The following similitude may make my meaning plain: set before a person who hath a weak or sickly stomach; the nicest food, well dressed, and plentifully supplied with the richest sauce; yet if there be any thing in it which disagrees with him, or to which he hath a natural antipathy, he cannot swallow it; he will nauseate it, and say, "this is a dainty repast, if

it had not been tinctured with this one ingredient. But this spoils all: I cannot any more touch it." So the ungodly will say, "this is a good man, and I could love him with all my heart, if he were not one of that sect, which is every where spoken against. It is a pity he should affect to be so strict and over-righteous. I could like him well enough if it were not for his religion. But as matters are, he can be no companion or familiar friend of mine." Nor are the godly behind hand with the ungodly in this respect: they too will say, "what an agreeable neighbour would this man be, if he had but grace? what an addition would it be to his other accomplishments." "It grieves me to think he hath no grace."

Between the wolf and the lamb there is an innate contrariety: should any part of them be made chords in the same musical instrument, the very chords, as some affirm, would jar, and always sound a discord. Be this as it will: believers may hence learn to beware of expecting any rest in this world, so long as they continue to be holy. The legacy left them by the Lord Jesus Christ in his last will and testament, is, "in the world you shall have tribulation." John xvi. 33. They must be content, whatever be their endowments, to meet with disputes, slanders, and persecutions. Let them likewise be careful that they barter not their holiness for worldly ease: for in the very moment in which the world

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will cease to molest them, will God erect his batteries against them; and his little finger is far heavier than the world's loins. That ease is much too dear, which is purchased at the expence of God's favour. Oh! the cross is sweet, when it is sanctified. Let them therefore not be discouraged, when men's attacks are most furious against them. This is but the treatment which angels received from devils; and but the very reception which the Lord of glory himself had, when he tabernacled in human flesh. The reproach or censure of men and devils is not a bad symptom. The wicked can never speak well of those who denounce God's judgments against their sins, which are dear unto them as their right eyes. Their language is, "who can have any regard for him, who would cut off our right hand, or pluck out our right eye? is he not the troubler of Israel? I abhor the very ground on which he treads." Let them alone: their scoffs is no scandal. The christian, who is most holy, will Satan abhor as the most filthy. His hatred is chiefly levelled at the Almighty, and, for this reason, he points his heaviest artillery against those who do most for the Lord. Through the servants, he would strike the master. His buffetings therefore are no signs of God's hatred, but rather an evidence of his love: for they, who are least disturbed by Satan, give him the least disturbance. Whoever sets himself against his kingdom is sure
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to hear from him: and the higher the service is, the hotter will be the persecution. But let none be disheartened at the assaults of the enemy. When he sallies forth in his great strength against us; great Michael will enter the lists with him: yea, the great captain of our salvation will stand up in our defence, and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. The heavenly hosts are on our side, and these have been, in all ages, very serviceable to the poor and distressed children of God. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father, who is in heaven." Matt. xviii. 10. Though these may be little in understanding, little in faith, little in their own esteem, and little in the eyes of the world; yet they are great in the sight of good angels. These deem it an honour to serve them. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. i. 14. It is not said, they *were*, but they *are* to this day hovering about the elect of God, beginning early and continuing late, as faithful centinels to guard their charge, and never intermitting their watch till they have safely conveyed them home.

"Michael disputed about the body of Moses." The only account that we have of the circumstance, which is supposed to be here alluded

alluded to, is in Deut. xxxiv. 6. where it is said, " he buried him in a valley, in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." The Lord, I say, buried him. Whether he commanded the angels to dig his grave, or said unto the earth, ' open and receive the body of my servant Moses, and then be closed again ;' it is certain, which way soever it was done, that Moses was buried. The Lord did not suffer those eyes, which saw more of his glorious majesty than any other mortal eyes, to be eaten by the ravens in the valley: but he buried them. He did not suffer those feet which trod upon the sacred mount, the mouth which read the holy law, or the hands which were holden up, while Israel discomfited Amalek, to be devoured by wild beasts or birds of prey: but he buried them. The devil wanted to attend the funeral, that he might see where the corpse was deposited, in order, as it is conjectured, that he might persuade the Israelites to come there and worship it: but Michael withstood him and kept him off. Hence we may learn that the principal drift of all his machinations is to lead men unto sin. As it is our Lord's design in every providence to promote our growth in holiness, so it is Satan's aim in all that he doeth or purposeth, to increase our sinfulness, or to make us more and more like himself. He never would have quarrelled with Job's children, possessions, and

bodily

bodily health, had he not been in hopes of leading him to impatience and distrust. He was not so much for dispossessing him of his wealth, as he was for sifting his grace. "Satan," said the dear Jesus to Peter, "hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." You see that his whole aim was to sift their faith. And when he raises great storms and tempests against ministers, and serious christians, his rancour is not so much against their persons, as against their godly deeds. When he imprisons, impoverishes, or slays the members of Christ; his view is to stop the progress of every good. Grace, like the herb which is called *morsus diaboli*, is the only thing, which he wants to bite and nip off. "Fling the head of grace to him over the walls, and he will with Joab raise the siege and be gone." 2 Sam. xx. 21. A foul-enemy he is, and nothing is so sweet to him as the death of souls. "Give me thy soul," saith he, "and thou mayest keep, or rather, I will give thee all that thy heart desireth." Oh! he is a malicious enemy and knows that the greatest hurt, which he can do us, is to rob us of the only thing that is worth possessing. As he is for striking at the best men, so he is for striking at the best thing in them, even their graces and their souls. And none but a murderer would strike at the heart.

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When Michael disputed with the devil about the body of Moses, " he durst not bring a railing accusation against him." We may learn from hence that it is a gracious privilege to be kept from sin, when we are under a necessity of having any intercourse with the wicked. Michael contends with the devil, and yet is holy and angelic. Satan encountered our blessed Saviour more than once; yet he contracted no filth from that foul spirit. It is a sign of a good constitution, when a man retains his bodily health in a tainted air. So the strength of grace should shew itself not only in shunning the society of the ungodly, but in not being corrupted by them when their society is unavoidable. It is possible that we may be obliged to associate with them; yet it is our duty, by our sacred vigilance and circumspection, to beware of being infected by the contagion of their bad example. Remember, christians, that they will not partake of your good, and why should you partake of their evil? They do not choose to deal in your heavenly ware, and why should you deal in their hellish commodities? They may be much in your company, for many years, without being a whit the better for you; but oh! it is a distinguished blessing, if you can mix so long with them, without being the worse for them. The most likely means, with God's grace, to keep you from railing accusations, or from falling into any sin

sin while you have occasion to have any intercourse with sinners, are these ; *first*, judge your own selves. You cannot well be too severe in the duty of self condemnation. Be quick sighted in the discovery of your own faults. Throw not a vail over your eyes, when you are alone or at home ; but inspect narrowly into your own hearts. They who are for sacrificing their brethren's characters, are guilty of what Pharaoh laid to the charge of the children of Israel : " they are idle—they are idle:" Exod. v. 17. that is, they take no pains to search their own hearts, and to examine their own conduct. The nearest enemy is the most odious enemy. Well then, your own sins are the nearest. O let them be the most odious in your sight.

Secondly, Look upon the behaviour of others through the spectacles of love. The apostle tells us, that " love thinketh no evil : " 1 Cor. xiii. 5. and it is equally true, that it speaketh no evil. Malice is ever railing. If it can find no faults, it will forge them. It will put the worst construction upon every thing that is done. " Love covers a multitude of sins," 1 Peter iv. 8. but malice and envy double the score.

Thirdly, Intreat the Lord to set a watch before your mouth, and resolve with David, " not to offend with your tongue." Psalm xxxix. 1. " Recompence to no man evil for evil." Rom. xii. 17. " Bless and curse not." Rom. xii. 14. It would be an acquisition far surpassing

passing the discovery of the philosopher's stone, if the door of the lips could be locked so fast, that no provocation could open it. Return not blow for blow. Let the ball of contention fall to the ground. Retort no charge that is brought against you; but commit your cause to him who judgeth righteously, according to the example of the blessed Immanuel. When you hear another reviled, stand up in his defence like a stone wall: but when you are personally reproached, be soft as a mud wall. In the former case guard your ears, in the latter your tongues.

Fourthly, Do with another man's name as you would wish that he should do with yours. If you will permit your neighbour's reputation to be murdered in your house, it is a hundred to one but that your reputation share the same fate in his: for with "what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Matt. vii. 2.

"He durst not:" from this expression we may learn that the fear of God is both a restraint from sin, and a strong bulwark against it. The greater fear casts out the least, as our Lord observes in Luke xii. 4, 5. If we do fear God, we have no need to fear man. "Sanctify the Lord God of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Isaiah viii. 13. These choose rather to be ridiculed for sanctity, than condemned for sin. These are not, like children, who

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are frightened at the mention of those ideal bug-bears, which cannot hurt them, and dread not that fire which may consume them. They are not such fools as to suffer themselves to be laughed out of their happy state, or sneered into the hazard of loosing their souls for ever. Abraham thought that "if the fear of God was in the court of Abimelech, they would not slay him for his wife's sake." Gen. xx. 11. "How can I do this great wickedness," said Joseph, "and sin against God." Gen. xxxix. 9. "The fear of the Lord," as Solomon observes, "is to hate evil." Prov. viii. 13. This fear will constrain us not only to abstain from outward sin, but inwardly to abominate it. It will not only bind our hands, but change our hearts. The fear of man may make us hide our sins, but the fear of the Lord will make us loath and detest them. Godly fear is the offspring of faith, and its worth will be conspicuous through all eternity. They, who tremble at the word, shall not smart under the rod. "I trembled in myself that I might rest in the day of trouble." Hab. iii. 16. The sure way to obtain rest in the hour of distress, is to fear the threatnings of that word, which hath fullness of joy in store for those who sow in tears, and abundance of ease in reserve for those, who have been made uneasy under the preaching of it. There is a good hope, through grace, that springs from godly fear. Noah
through

through fear built the ark, and he rested in the days of trouble. A railing accusation is a heinous sin. It is a sin against God and is strictly forbidden by him. "Judge not, that you be not judged." Matt. vii. 1. "Thou shalt not go up and down as tale-bearers among thy people." Lev. xix. 16. "He, who speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." James iv. 11. This crime was severely punished when there came forth two she bears out of the wood and tore forty and two children in Bethel. 2 Kings, ii. 24. It was a shocking sight to their parents to see so many dead corpses weltering in their gore. A caution this is to parents not to let their children mock and insult the Lord's prophets, but to bring them up in his fear. St. Paul strongly argues against judging others in Rom. xiv. 13. "Judge nothing," saith he, "before the time." 1 Cor. iv. 5. And indeed what hath any man to do with another's servant? Some reflect upon others for their godliness and sanctity: but doth not this reflection fall heaviest upon God, who is the author of godliness and sanctity? It is his usual method graciously to appear in behalf of his saints, and to plead for them when they are thus accused. If any shall condemn the inhabitants of Nazareth in the gross, Jesus will stand up for his chosen

Nathaniel, and say, "behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile!" John i. 47. If Annanias counts Saul, who was surnamed Paul, a murderer: Jesus will vindicate him from this imputation, and own him as a choice vessel which he hath set apart for himself, "to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Acts ix. 15. By railing at others we injure our hearers: we murder and destroy brotherly kindness in them. Railing, though it may be sweet to the flesh, is yet a deadly poison: which, infused through the ear, hath often brought on the most fatal mortification. It hath caused a separation between many good friends, who used to go into the house of God together, till the tale-bearer kindled the flame of discord among them, and separated very friends. But the railer not only sins against God, and injures those with whom he doth converse; but he is a sad enemy to himself. He sorely wounds and lacerates his own soul. To blast his neighbour's fame, he will not hesitate to expose his own folly. To shew the warmth of his rage against his neighbour; he will run the risk of being broiled himself in hell. He cares not how deep he sinks under the wrath of God, if he can but vent his own anger. He scatters fire-brands about him, though they may set his own house in a blaze; and blows the ashes with vehemence, though it may cost him his own eyes. Solomon justly remarks, "that he who uttereth slander is

a fool." Prov. x. 18. It is inconsistent with true religion. "If any among you seems to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain." James i. 26. To utter slander, is a dishonour to the slanderer himself. He is the devil's eldest son. He bears the devil's name, that is a slanderer. His mouth is the devil's engine, filled with the waters of Meribah, which he spouts abroad at his pleasure. "The poison of asps is under his lips, and with his tongue he cuts as with a sharp razor." He is the devil's agent, who exposes to sale, or rather freely distributes his accursed ware. Yea, he is the devil's musician, who tries to soothe the pangs of his wretched master; and by his melody, if possible, to make him a little chearful. He defiles his own heart and tongue, more than he flurs his neighbour's reputation. He much resembles a butcher's dog, who being taught by his master, not to touch the choice pieces, looks upon the offals as his lawful prey, and swallows them most voraciously: or like a hog in a garden, who, though there may be in it many delicate and fragrant flowers, will not yet touch one of them: if there be any dunghill in any corner of it, there will he be raking and smelling, counting that heap of stench and filth far preferable to the gayest and most odoriferous parterre. So do railers and slanderers rake into the faults and foibles of their fellow men, and make

it their business to retail them : but they are as much afraid to cast a glance at their graces, as the owls are to stare at the meridian sun.

He durst not bring against him a railing accusation, " but said, the Lord rebuke thee." It is probable that Satan roared, defamed, and made use of the most scurrilous terms : for this is his nature. His mouth is full of blasphemies. " And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them who dwell in heaven." Rev. xiii. 6. But Michael was of a quite different spirit. He avenged not himself, but left it in his hands to whom vengeance belongs, " Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Rom. xii. 19. This should teach us patience and meekness under every provocation. " For even hereunto we are called : because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we may follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously." 1 Peter, ii. 21, 22, 23. Learn of Jesus to be meek. He doth not require it of you to learn of him to create a world, to walk upon the sea, to feed thousands with few loaves and fishes, to cleanse the lepers, to give sight to the blind, to hush the winds, to calm the seas, to heal the diseased, or to cast out devils :

vils: but he commands you to learn meekness from his example. "Learn of me," saith he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart. A Lamb he was, "taking away the sins of the world." And lambs ought we to be and not lions, sheep and not wolves, doves and not dogs. If we bark, "bite, and devour one another, we should take heed that we be not consumed one of another." Gal. v. 15. We are devoutly exhorted by the apostle to "let our moderation be known unto all men, because the Lord is at hand." Phil. iv. 5. Shall we differ and quarrel among ourselves while the judge is at the door? But alas! who can without sorrow reflect, that as Ephraim was full of drunkards, and Crete was full of liars, and Ephesus was full of idolaters, so doth our world abound with raders and slanderers. The tongue hath many fences, which ought to keep it within due bounds. It hath many ligaments at its root, which should curb it. The teeth, like a bone wall, inclose it and should confine it. The lips, like an earthen wall, are its outworks and should prevent its emissaries from going abroad: yet all are too weak to bridle the tongue. Most of the evils, which are in the world, owe their rise to the tongue. It is without a doubt the channel, through which these too common vices flow, such as foolish talking, idle and obscene jesting, back biting, lying, cursing, blaspheming, false swearing, railing, accusations, &c. Bembo was mute for three months, that

that he might learn to put in practice the first verse of the 39th Psalm, which runs thus, "I will take heed to my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue. And it is better to be dumb for ever than to utter that, which is vain, false, injurious, or unprofitable. Excellent was the observation of the British bard when he expressed himself nearly in the sense of the following couplet,

If thy words don't mend the hearer,

Better bite thy lips than blabber.

Michael would not bring a railing accusation against the devil, and wilt thou rail at thy brother? The best way to succeed with a surly, blustering person, is to treat him with tenderness. A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." Prov. xv. 1. Wool is a more effectual barrier against a ball of lead than a wall of brass. Wild-fire is sooner extinguished with milk than with water. Goat's blood, they say, will sooner split a diamond than an iron hammer. The sight of a mulberry will sooner pacify an elephant than the sight of a sword. A boil is sooner assuaged by anointing than by squeezing it. "Wherefore," saith the apostle, "if thine enemy hunger, feed him; and if he thirst give him drink." &c. Rom. xii. 20. Ambrose told Calligonus, "I will suffer and be silent, which is the part of a bishop: but do thou act, and speak, which is the property of a murderer." It is said that two sheep met on a narrow bridge, and that the one of them lay down to let the other

other pass over her : then she rose, and went on herself. Amazing ! that every animal should know its place better than man. Michael the archangel delivered Satan over into the hands of God, that he might rebuke him. And his conduct in this respect was proper, and agreeable to those scriptures, which enjoin us not to say, “ I will recompense evil : I will do unto him as he hath done unto me : I will render unto the man according to his work : ” Prov. xxiv. 29. but to wait on the Lord. and he will save us.” Prov. xx. 2. Revenge opposes the will of God, grieves, and quenches his spirit, which is dove-like and loves peace. It makes an opening and gives way to the devil. It is for turning the Lord out of his office. None but himself hath the art to pass judgment upon enemies without sin. We, for our part, would make him, if we could, rather an executioner than a judge. When any offend us, we would command fire to come down from heaven and instantly consume them : but let us fear God, and beware, that it do not consume ourselves. Which of the two sinners deserves most to be smitten ? is it he, who sinned awhile, or he who sins now, by imprecating speedy judgment on his enemy, contrary to God’s word ? who hath injured thee ? if it be a brother, forgive him : if it be an enemy, pray for him ; for he knew not what he was doing. What wanton cruelty and madness would it be in thee to hew in pieces a dead man, a man spiritually dead, I mean ?

I mean? Wouldst thou prosecute him for any crime, who is out of his senses? such is every graceless person. He is never in his right mind. He doth himself abundantly more mischief than he can do unto others. By his attempts to slay thy ass, he slays himself. By tearing thy cloaths, he mangles his own body. By impairing thy temporal life, he destroys his own immortal soul. Such an object as this deserves pity more than punishment. Remember the prayer of the Saviour of the world, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Wilt thou enter into a lasting contest with him, who hath the leprosy or the plague? Beware of catching one of his diseases. If he hath wronged thee, there is no reason why thou shouldest wrong thyself. There can be no nobler conquest than for a man to get the mastery over his own revengeful heart. Saul felt this truth and owned it. 1 Sam. xxiv. 18—29. He, who returns good for evil, and loves them who hate him, wearies them with his patience, and follows the example of his God.

See R

S E R M O N V.

The sincere Milk of the Word.

1 Peter, ii. 2, *As new born Babes desire the sincere Milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.*

THIS scripture contains an earnest, and an affectionate address to the believing Jews, in which the apostle exhorts them to grow in faith, and in every divine and holy temper: and as the means, by which this growth is promoted and perfected, is the lively preaching the word of truth, he stirs them up to hunger and long for that word of God, which is the food and nourishment of the soul, in the same manner as babes thirst and cry for that milk of their mothers, which is ordained to nourish and keep them alive. The words allude to two sorts of birth: one birth is earthly and carnal, and implies being born of the first Adam; through whom original sin, like the poison of an asp, hath overspread and defiled our whole mass: the other birth is heavenly and spiritual, and implies our

being born of the second Adam, who is Jesus Christ; through whom grace and holiness are ingrafted and grow in us. In this last birth God is a Father to beget us, and the church is a mother to bring us forth: the seed, with which we are begotten again, is the word of God; the nurses, who foster and feed us, are the ministers of Jesus Christ; and the breasts, at which we suck, are those breasts of the gospel, which yield sincere milk, as the text suggests. We shall, with God's assistance, take notice of five remarkable points which flow naturally from the separate branches of this passage. And let us consider,

First, The qualification, that must be implanted in all who would be improved, and edified by God's word—"they must be as new born babes."

Secondly, The primary operation of the mind in babes—"they desire"

Thirdly, What we are to desire—"the milk of the word."

Fourthly, What kind of milk we should desire—"the sincere milk of the word."

Lastly, For what end or use we should desire the sincere milk of the word—"that we may grow thereby."

I shall endeavour to illustrate each of these particulars, and to apply them to your respective consciences as God shall enable me.

I begin with the qualification, that must be implanted in all, who would be improv-

ed and edified by God's word, which is, that they must be "as new born babes." We know that babes are commendable for their simplicity and harmlessness. This should be our distinguishing character, whoever we are, if we would be instructed and benefited in the school of Christ, or would derive light and comfort from the preaching of the word. "Suffer little children," saith our blessed Saviour, "to come unto me." Mark x. 14. None are fit to be taught by him, till they are converted, and become as a little child. "The secret of the Lord is with them who fear him:" Psalm xxv. 14. which intimates, that God doth not admit that any unregenerate soul even knows that it is a secret. They therefore who would have the Lord Jesus for their teacher, to reveal in them his mind and will, must be divested of their sins and cleansed from all impurity. For wisdom will not rest in a profane soul, or make its abode in a heart that is tarnished with guilt. As Satan will not dwell in a house, where religion hath any footing: so the Spirit of God will not long abide in any habitation, that is not swept clean from all impiety and unrighteousness. God will not put new wine into old bottles. Matt. ix. 17. If we desire not to have new hearts, let us not look for new blessings. Deplorable is the state of the Jews on account of their unbelief: they daily read the scriptures, that they may see Jesus; but they read them in vain,

because the darkness of their perverse hearts blinds their understanding. So do we preach in vain, and so do you hear in vain, because the vail of sin obscures, and conceals the light of the gospel from you. Wherefore, my dearly beloved in Christ Jesus, if you wish that the Lord would bless your hearing, and give success to our preaching, you must cast out the dregs of sin which turn your souls sour, and rub off the rust of sin, which brings down the curse of God upon you, when you are expecting to receive a blessing, and causes the word of God to be the favour of death unto you, and not the favour of life. 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. The bosom sins of men do, as it were, stop the mouth of Christ, and hinder him from speaking to them by his spirit or ministers. This is as true as that the unbelief of his countrymen tied his hands from working many miracles among them. Matt. xiii. 58. It is Jeremiah's counsel to "break up the fallow ground, and not to sow among thorns," that is, among those worldly cares, which spring up, and choak the plants of salutary instructions. Jer. iv. 3. And Solomon says, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God." Eccles. v. 1. By comparing the behaviour of the world in general with these and the like scriptures, a man of sense and consideration will see sufficient reason to be grieved in his inmost soul. Alas! alas! what shall we think of ourselves, when we consider what a bustle and noise about the world there are among some;

some; what foolish wishing there is among others, and what jeering and scoffing are in the mouths of the generality? Surely the eye of faith may see all these going into church with the devil in their hearts, and many of them coming out of it with the curse of God upon their heads. Most people change their cloaths on the sabbath-day, and would deem it hard to be denied this necessary refreshment; but they do not mind bringing the same heart, that they had all the week, to the service of the sabbath. Their sons and their daughters, for the most part, spend more time at their looking glasses to deck their bodies to appear before men, than they employ in prayer to sanctify and prepare their souls to come before God. Alas! poor souls, what can you say to these things? Your inattention to them will not excuse you. Your levity and sneers at me, for reproving you, aggravate, instead of lessening your guilt. I only discharge the commission which I have received from the Lord. And if any of his people do hear me let me beseech them, in Christ's stead, to abhor the sinful maxims and the corrupt conversation of a wicked world. Long to be as little children, and not only as little children, but as new born babes, having new hearts, new members, a new life, and new desires ingrafted in you. Be converted not from one sin only, but from all your iniquities; so as to become altogether other men, or new creatures. The old heart, the old hand, and the old eye will not serve your turn: but they

must all be moulded and formed anew. 2 Cor. v. 17. Henceforth, if you desire to be relenitive hearers, you will not dare to have any communication with sin. You will neither entertain nor welcome it. But as the snake casts her slough, and the eagle sheds her bill; so you will put away from you your lusts and passions, and come, as little children, to hear the word of God. The iron must be heated before it can be wrought: so the soul must be warmed at the fire of divine contemplation, before it can be meet to handle the word of life. You must not touch the unclean thing, even with a finger's end. 2 Cor. vi. 17. For one little thief, harboured in the house, will open the doors for many more: one unclean spirit, you know took with him seven others, and each of them was more wicked than himself. Matt. xii. 45. Behold, in short this is the temper that ought to be in you, when you go to hear the word of God: you should be simple, divested of prejudices, and wholly seperated from sin. Such of you, as are thus renewed in the spirit of your minds, answer the description given in the text, and are like new born babes, whose primary operation it is

Secondly, "to desire." Yet we are not to be like wavering, unsteady children, "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine;" Ephes. iv. 14. staggering from faith to faith, and from religion to religion, as a drunken man reels from side to side. Nor are we to be children in knowledge and understanding.

standing. "Brethren," saith Paul, "be not children in understanding, howbeit in malice be ye children: but in understanding be men," 1 Cor. xiv. 20. It is in neither of these respects that we are to be children. But we are, as new born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word. "Blessed are they, who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Matt. v. 6. God satisfies the hungry with good things, and the rich he sends empty away. Indeed when our hearts are inflamed with an ardent longing after the word, and we have an eager appetite to hear it, that is the time in which the word operates most powerfully on us. Our hearts are then, like melted wax, ready to receive any impression. The Shunamite's son, whom Elisha raised to life, after his flesh waxed warm, needed, opened his eyes, and revived. So when we are fervent in spirit, and feel a vehement desire and thirst after the word, we may certainly conclude that we are born again, that there are life and breath in us, and that we are not utterly dead, or devoid of every spark of grace. On the contrary, they, who have no keen stomachs, which want to be fed and satiated with the milk of the word, are but so many dead carcases, or skins stuffed with rotten bones; and it would be the same thing to desire the naturally dead to quit their graves, as to desire such to leave their sins. Well may our land be compared to Golgotha, a place full of dead men's skulls. It is melan-

choly to think that there are in it many
 thousands of miserable souls dead in sins, and
 dead in affections: who have no spiritual life
 for God's word, or the least hankering after
 it. If they have a meal'd mouthed priest to
 read a little unto them now and then, they
 count themselves very fortunate: as if Elisha's
 staff was sufficient to raise the dead child to life,
 without Elisha himself. They imagine that
 the word is able to give life of itself, and
 hence they seek not the spirit of the Lord. If
 they had even Judas for their teacher, they
 would be satisfied with him, and would not
 go a step farther to hear Paul. Woe is me
 that I am obliged to declare, that the ministers
 who reprove them the least for their sins, and
 detain them for the shortest while in the
 churches, are held in the highest estimation
 by them. Their sentiments are very different
 from the sentiments of those worthies of old,
 who "delighted in the law of the Lord, and in
 his law meditated day and night." Psalm ii. 2.
 who "departed not from the temple, but
 served God with fastings, and prayers, night
 and day." Luke ii. 37. They plainly shew
 that they have no relish for God's word, and
 that they do not desire it as new born babes.
 But why are we exhorted, as new born babes
 to desire the sincere milk of the word? I an-
 swer, because as new born babes cry for their
 mother's milk, as soon as they are born into
 the world; so should the christian hunger
 and thirst for the milk of the word, as soon as
 he

he finds himself regenerated by the grace of God. If the nurse were to neglect supplying the child with milk, it would not be able to live for three days. Much less can our faith subsist, without being fed and nourished by the bread of life. Our Lord commanded that some thing should be given to Jairus's daughter to eat, as soon as he raised her from the dead. Mark v. 43. As if it was in vain for us to be revived by God's finger, if we be not fed with the word of his grace. It is a great fault among us, that we do not, when God quickens us by his spirit, and we experience his grace implanted and flourishing in us—that we do not, I say, then apply for juice and moisture to water it, and prevent its being scorched up, like the seed, which fell on the rocky ground, or the grass, that grows on the horse top. We deem it a great miracle that Elijah lived forty days without food: but it is a matter of much greater astonishment, if we reflected upon it, that hundreds of souls should exist for forty years and longer perhaps, without a morsel of soul-nutrimment. This is a sore famine which is very common among us. But shameful it is, that any should thus famish in a land, where plenty of provisions is freely offered without money, and without price. Isaiah lvi. 1. Many think that it is too soon to begin, when they ought to finish their religious course. As our Lord was sent for, to heal the ruler's daughter when she was at the point of death: so many will

not desire the prayers or company of God's ministers, till they are arrested by death. Then they wish to die the death of the righteous, though they have lived the lives of devils. Then they will seek for repentance, perhaps with tears, tho' before they slighted the offers of it. They will not set about building the ark, till they see the deluge, or seriously be concerned till the devils are about their beds waiting to receive their souls. Thus they delay the time from day to day, and are like a wicked and lazy lawyer, who puts off his client from term to term till the suit is lost. Lot tarried in Sodom till the angel was obliged to use force, and to thrust him out, as it were against his will. And in truth if God doth not pluck us, as brands out of the burning fire, by his free grace, and remove by his spirit the vail of darkness and ignorance from our minds, none can be saved. Wherefore, my dear brethren, if Paul hath planted you in the true faith; beg to be watered by Apollos: if you have been made partakers of one grace, attend the means of grace, that you may grow thereby. For the best gifts will sooner wither and decay, if they be not moistened with the dew of heaven. Children are so eager for food when they are hungry, that they will neither regard the necessities, nor consult the conveniency or leisure of their nurses, but deaf to all excules, they will have the breast when they want it: in like manner, it is not enough for us to desire
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the word, but we must be loud, earnest, and importunate in our requests for it. Much to our purpose is that parable in Luke xii. 36. where we are told, that when one asked for bread in the night, the other answered that he was in bed: some may be apt to think that such a reasonable answer would have justified his denial; but it was not satisfactory upon such an occasion. So my beloved people, though we may have long cried without success for the bread of life, yet ought we not to be disheartened, but to continue instant in prayer, and rather redouble, than slacken our importunity, knocking at the door, like Peter, till it be opened.

We must ask and take no refusal, if we would receive the blessing. Jacob wrestled with the angel, and would not let him go till he blessed him. Gen. xxxii. 26.

This doctrine is a reproof to many of us, who pretend to walk in the paths of the Lord, and yet are languid and very slow in our advances. We may have a little love for the truth, but we will not boldly stand up in its defence. We are like a merchant, who is fond of gain; but cannot venture on the seas, for fear of being drowned. There are some among us, who will profess an attachment to God and his cause, so far as the goddess Diana will permit them;—but no farther. Some would rather stay at home among their cattle, than serve God in the church. Others would sooner let the devil rend and tear their souls

souls at their own fire side, than suffer a shower of rain to touch their cloaths, in going to the house of God: and a third sort, of greater knowledge, as you would imagine, and whom, to outward appearance, even a knot would choak, make no scruple to swallow a camel—utter abundance of falsehoods to disguise their hypocrisy, and though their faces are bedewed with tears in a church, can hardly be distinguished from Pagans in a market. In these the words of the apostle are exactly fulfilled, “they have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; from such turn away.” 2 Tim. iii. 5. Children, after they have been well fed, have recourse, in a short time, to the breast again, and must have a *whet*, as we may say, between meal and meal. So should our diet be the same as Elijah’s—“bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening.” 1 Kings xvii. 6.

Our souls should be fed early and late. “The word of Christ should dwell in us richly.” Col. iii. 16. It is not enough that it should lodge with us for a night, and, like a traveller, be gone in the morning: but it must abide daily, and continually in our hearts. Though the ground may be good, yet it must have the former and the latter rain, before it can be fruitful. Alas! alas! some fancy that one shower will compleat the business, and that by hearing one sermon, or by once gabbling over hastily, “Lord, have mercy upon us!”

us! they shall make sure of heaven. But if this were true, vain would have been our Saviour's exhortation, to "strive to enter in at the strait gate." Luke xiii. 24. Not so, not so, my dear souls! but we must, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, immediately, without delay, or loss of time; incessantly, without weariness; cheerfully, without murmuring; constantly, without falling away; and perseveringly, unto the end. Proceed we now to consider

Thirdly, what we are to desire; and that is our food, and sustenance in Christ Jesus; which, in the text, are called, "the milk of the word." To this our Saviour invites us, as being far superior to our richest dainties. "Labour not for the meat, which perisheth; but for that meat, which endureth unto everlasting life." John vi. 27. The word of God is an enduring food, and an immortal seed, which preserves those, who feed upon it, from famine and death. 1 Pet. i. 23—25. But we desire many things in preference to the milk of the word. There is a desire of money, which is the root of all evil. There is a carnal desire, which wars against the soul. There is a desire of superiority, which inflates the proud. There is a desire of revenge, which springs from a rash and impetuous spirit. There is a desire of praise, which is pharisaical and ostentatious: and there is a desire of the milk of the word, which a few only have, that is vehement and blessed

blessed. When Jonathan saw the honey dropping from the wood, he licked it with his tongue: so when we find the milk of the word, we ought greedily to catch and swallow it. Among all the blessings with which the land of Canaan abounded, the chief was this, viz. "that it flowed with milk and honey:" and the prospect of this reconciled the Israelites to the wilderness in their journey to it. Well, the word of God abounds with far better milk and honey: and we should spare no pains, or reckon no hardship too great, in order to obtain it. God hath honoured it with many renowned titles that he might recommend it in stronger terms to our regard. It is called a "lamp to guide our feet, and a light unto our paths." Psalm cxix. 105. It is also called a leader to lead us, a medicine to heal us, a bridle to curb and check us, a sword to defend us, milk to nourish us, wine to cheer us, a treasure to enrich us, and a key to unlock, and open the gate of heaven for us. Thus is the word named in scripture, and all these names are given it, that we might desire it above all things. Wherefore the word of God should not be held in small repute among us, because we do not know what blessings it may bring down upon us. It is the word of salvation, and it saves many a soul from perishing with hunger. As Elisha said unto Naaman concerning Jordan "wash in it and be clean:" so may we say to the hearer respecting the word, "feed on it, and live for ever."

It is stiled the word of life, because it enlivenens the spirit. It is entitled the word of the covenant, because it is the golden chain, that binds God and man together. It is denominated a pearl of unspeakable worth, because it brings the soul acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ. And hence, as David longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem, so should we long for the milk of the word. But why is it called "milk?" Because it is the only food of the faithful; and because it is strengthening and refreshing to the soul, as milk is to babes. O then who can without regret observe how many Michaels there are in the world who mock David for dancing before the ark! Many, too many there are alas! among us, who deem us no better than mad men, because we press to hear the word. But as Jesus said, "Father, forgive them:" so may God forgive these, for they know not what they say! Did they feel that tranquility of conscience, that gladness of heart, that consolation of the spirit, and that inexpressible joy in God, with which believers are often favoured under the preaching of the word, they would not count us fools: no, no. but they would rush in among us, and neither pleasure nor gain, neither reproaches nor dangers would hinder them from being fellow hearers with us. So much for the food. Now let us consider,

Fourthly, The nature and quality of that milk which we are to desire. It is described

in the text by the epithet "sincere." It is milk in its taste and operation : and as the natural body cannot be supplied with sweet chyle and good blood without wholesome diet, so neither will our hearts and affections, nor our words and works be good or savory, unless the milk, with which our souls are nurtured, be salubrious and sincere. Wherefore as our Saviour admonishes us, to "take heed *how* we hear:" Matt. iv. 2. so the apostle, in the same strain, warns us to "take heed *what* we hear," or with what food we are fed. For there is a pure doctrine, Prov. xxx. 5. and there is a doctrine full of leaven. Matt. xvi. 6. There is the new wine of the gospel, Matt. ix. 17. and there is the mixt wine in the great whore's cup which is grossly adulterated. Rev. xvii. 2. There is a communication that ministers grace to the hearers, 1 Tim. iv. 6. and there is a communication that corrupts and defiles them. Eph. iv. 9. There is God's teaching, John vii. 16, and there are the teachings of the devils. 1 Tim. iv. 1. There is a word that edifies, Eph. iv. 12. and there is a word that eats as a canker. 2 Tim. ii. 17. As the sons of the prophets cried out and said, "there is death in the pot;" so may some lament that there is death in their food : and this is the reason, why we are so often enjoined in scripture to "beware of false prophets, who come to us in sheep's cloathing. but are inwardly no better than ravening wolves : " Matt. vii. 15. and
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to take care that "no man spoil us through philosophy, and vain deceit:" Col. ii. 8. and that we "believe not every spirit, but that we try the spirits, whether they be of God." 1 John iv. 1. as we taste our meat, before we eat it, and refine our gold before we lay it up as our treasure. Our Saviour, when he had tasted the vinegar, and found it mingled with gall, would not drink it: so should we reject and nauseate every false doctrine that enters into our ears. The generality, alas! feed upon the dragon's milk, and take pains to learn the language of Egypt, instead of the language of Canaan. Hear they do, but to no purpose. At church in the morning, at the public house in the evening, gadding abroad for their pleasure, or engaged in vain, unmeaning conversation are they to be found. Oh! what an abuse of precious time is this! May the Lord look in mercy upon it! may he give us to know that it is not his will, that any ground should receive two sorts of seed, or that one heart should admit two kinds of doctrine. Dragon cannot stand in the same house with the ark: much less can the truth, as it is in Jesus, have fellowship with iniquity and error. Wherefore as ministers ought to be careful, that they make no gain or merchandize of God's word; so ought their flocks to see that they drink no milk but that which is sincere. Take heed then, my beloved people, how you conduct yourselves: for as much

as you know how eager Satan is to way-lay you, and, under pretences of reformation, to introduce unscriptural worship into the temple of God. Now, brethren, I forewarn you again, as I have often forewarned you already, that you go not to hear the word, where it is mixed with heresy; and that you believe not those who would pervert the gospel of Christ. Gal. i. 8. 9.

I go on, in the last place, to consider the end or use for which we should desire the sincere milk of the word, and that is, "that we may grow thereby." The design of our hearing is that we may grow in grace, in faith, and righteousness. Believers are called "the trees of righteousness," to intimate to us that they grow; lively stones, which further the building of the spiritual edifice; 1 Peter ii. 5, faithful servants, who trade with their Lord's talents, that they may receive their own with usury; Matt. xxv. 16, living branches, which must be dressed, and pruned by the hand of the heavenly husbandman: and all these metaphors are calculated to represent unto us their growth. We are not always to be children, but we must henceforth "increase in stature, till we come unto the fullness of Christ." As the star pursued its course till it came, and stood over the place where the young child was, so should we walk forward in the path of duty, and never rest till we come to the full fruition of God.

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We must advance from grace to grace. 1 Theff. iii. 12. What kind of men are we, who read and hear the word without deriving any saving benefit from it? We are like Pharaoh's lean kine, which did eat the well favoured and fat kine, and yet were no fatter themselves. Gen. xli. 4. So are many of us lean fleshed and as lank in the knowledge of God, as if we had never sucked the milk of the word. There are hardly any of us, who are more zealous, more faithful, more active for the truth, more holy, or more fervent in religion, than we were some years ago. Scarcely have we one person less ungodly, than he was, before he had heard the last hundred sermons. Like the raven, we have no thoughts of returning unto Noah into the ark. Though we have often heard, and are still inclined to hear the word; yet we do not profit by our hearing. Still we are but babes in Christ: and scarcely able to creep about. We are little in faith, little in love, little in patience, little in humility and zeal; yea so little in stature, that, with Zaccheus, we cannot see Christ. This is an unerring testimony, that we have hearts of stone, and not hearts of flesh within us. The showers of the word make no impression upon them. And hence it is that we have every where among us as much covetousness, bribery, deceit, fraud, lasciviousness, and envy, as we had before the light of the gospel dawned up-

on us. Several are as dishonest in their dealings, as negligent in the service of God, as proud in their dress, as hypocritical at the church, and as sinful at home, as they ever where. Oh! how many prayerless families have we in the midst of us, though it hath been often proved, that the devil hovers about the tents of those, who worship not God in their household, and that they live, as it were, without God in the world. And what is the cause of this impious neglect, but that we attend church ordinances more for the sake of hearing, than of being improved. Nay, while we are under the preaching of the word, some of us, as Eutychus, fall asleep; Acts xx. 9. others forget all that they have heard, as Nebuchadnezzar forgot his dream, and others do remember it, but they make no use of it. But know and be assured, my friends, that it would have been better for you not to have heard, than not to profit by it: for our Lord hath declared, that if he "had not come and spoken unto us, we should have had no sin, in comparison with what we now have; but that now, we have no cloak for our sin." John xv. 22. Alas! alas! if the servant, who wrapped up his talent in a napkin, and hid it in the earth, was cast into outer darkness; of what punishment shall they be counted worthy, who idly squander their talents! Each of us therefore should mind what we hear, lest we should

should receive the grace of God in vain. We should attend the ministry, not out of curiosity, or for any bye end; but that we may grow and be better thereby. Now, whoever thou art, O man, who hearest this, search thy conscience, and examine whether thou art in any measure reformed, since the last sermon that thou hast heard. See whether thou hadst a sin on the last sabbath day, which thou hast not on this sabbath: and if thou findest no alteration in thyself, but that thou art the same as ever thou wast, be convinced that thou hast not been benefited by the food which thou didst receive. Woe is me! woe is me! nothing breaks my heart more than to think how attentive to my words many of you are this day, who yet, before to-morrow's sun hath illuminated the earth, may suffer the greedy worm of covetousness, or the little foxes of some lusts to spoil your vines, and root up and devour the seed which hath been sown to day on the tablets of your hearts, even as Jonah's "gourd withered, when the morning rose the next day." As some of you however may be differently disposed, I shall conclude the whole with a few directions suited to your state, as being desirous of a blessing on the word of God, that you may grow thereby.

First, Be sure in the morning to look up unto the Lord, and to direct a private, serious prayer unto him for your preservation

in the spiritual conflict in which you are going to engage.

Secondly, Separate yourselves from the company of the profane, while you are on the road. If you do converse with any, remember to commune together in the same gracious strain as the two disciples, who were going to Emmaus; and you may then hope that the Lord Jesus will not disdain to make one of the company, and to go with you. It is grievous to see some men, while they approach God's house, burthening their memories and discomposing their hearts with fruitless or silly talk. These, when they come under the word, can reap no advantage from it: for no vessel can contain more than what will fill it. And when,

Thirdly, you are assembled together before God, follow the example of Zaccheus, who, when he had come into the way through which Jesus was to pass, and could not see him, because the press was so great, and he was so little of stature, Luke xix. 2, 3, 4. was loath to return home disappointed: so because a sight of the crowd would not content him, he ran and climbed up into a sycamore tree. But alas! how few are actuated by such motives in our land; or will take so much pains in coming at a view of the Saviour! Most men think themselves very safe and good christians, if they are found within the walls of the church, though they never meet Jesus there, or have any thoughts

thoughts of meeting him ; but probably fall asleep there or spend the greatest part of the time in staring and yawning. After this they return home as merry and joyful, as if they had gotten their errand, and had seen the Lord Jesus Christ. But we may well say unto those, who thus appear before God, and tread in his courts, “ who hath required this at your hands ? Bring no more such vain oblations ; such incense is abomination unto the Lord. The new moons, the sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies he cannot away with ; it is iniquity, even your solemn meeting,” when performed in such a manner as this. Isaiah i. 12, 13. Finally, after you have received the good seed from the mouth of ministers, abstain from the society of lukewarm formalists, lest they quash the sacred flame which hath been kindled in your breasts, by their lifeless example, and have no fellowship with the children of the devil, lest they sow tares among the wheat by their corrupt communications. And when you return to your respective houses, call your families together, and implore God’s blessing on what you have heard. It is customary, you know, for people to enquire of their children and servants, when they come home from a fair or market, what news they have heard. Now do you turn this custom to a more sacred use, and ask of them what they can recollect of the great business, in which they have been employed, and whether they have received any improvement

ment from it. Be a terror to such of them as have been careless or drowsy, and tender to those who remember the word, and are impressed with it. This course, strictly adhered to, may, with the blessing of the Almighty, make you and your household wise unto salvation. And may God, of his infinite mercy, multiply your graces through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

S E R M O N VI.

Good news to the Gentiles.

Matt. ii. 8. 9. *And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, go, and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found him, bring me word again that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo! the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.*

WHEN the Saviour of sinners was born, the glad tidings of his birth were first announced, not to the great men of the world—not to princes who sat upon thrones, or to priests who were usually despisers of grace; but to poor shepherds, who were “abiding in the field, and keeping watch over their flock by night”—that he might not only stain the pride of men, but also teach us, that his grace is free, and communicable to the meanest among

among them. This is not the manner of men. They generally keep the best things, that they may present them to the kings and queens of the earth ; and the poor are put off with the refuse, or with that which is not worth the acceptance of any body else. But Jesus Christ, the peerless pearl—"the righteousness who looked down from heaven, and the truth who sprang out of the earth," was first made known to persons in the lowest station, to shew that no condition, be it ever so indigent, is below the notice of God, or a bar against having a part in the Lord Jesus Christ. But lest the mean of the world should claim an exclusive right to him, he was likewise manifested to the wise men of the east, who were kings, as some imagine, and were certainly rich, as their valuable gifts imply---that He might evidence, and illustrate his readiness to save all ranks, and degrees among the human race. Beautifully was he figured out by the "tree that was in the midst of the garden." Gen. ii. 9. He is the center of grace, and diffuses its influence in every point of direction. As the tree of life in the new Jerusalem is said to be "in the midst of the street;" Rev. xxii. 2. that its leaves might be for the healing of the nations : so is Jesus in the midst of his church, that he may communicate himself to gentle and simple, and make them alike partakers of a divine nature. This consideration should unite all degrees of men in love, and friendship one with another. The rich should not despise

despise the poor, and the poor should not disparage the rich. Neither the one nor the other can be saved but through the merits of Jesus Christ. Their outward state makes no difference. It was to strengthen the hands of the poor, that the Lord of glory was born of a poor virgin, who was espoused to a carpenter. If you should question the poverty of Mary, and Joseph ; read Luke, ii. 24. and you will there find, that when they presented the child Jesus in the temple, their sacrifice was the very offering which the poor were enjoined to offer in the law of Moses, Lev. xii. 8. viz. " a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons." Learn hence that none ought to pour contempt upon others on account of their low descent. All spring from the same degenerate stock : and if you value yourselves on the score of those petty distinctions, which prevail among men, our Lord will not countenance you in it, either by his word, or example. No, " he often raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill ; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." Psalm cxiii. 7, 8 " He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds. He raised him from the humble office of following the ewes, great with young, to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance." Psalm lxxviii. 70, 71. Let this abash the empty pride of this world, which puffs up many, as if they were beings of a superior order to the

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rest of mankind, or even gods in their own vain imagination. He, who was stiled the carpenter's son, will ere long be their judge, and strip them of their borrowed plumes. They may think that their money will supply all their wants, and procure them every necessary conveniency: but let them know that money, yea, mountains ribbed with gold, and whole provinces inlaid with jewels, cannot redeem one soul, or purchase the least favour from an offended God. The blessed Jesus hath done more for us, by his poverty, than all the treasures of a thousand worlds could do. He hath, during his state of humiliation, "washed us from our sins in his own blood." Rev. i. 5.

But it is time, that I should turn from these shepherds to the wise men of the east, who are the particular subjects of the narrative in my text. And indeed the manifestation of our Lord to them hath a more immediate reference to us, than the other. The shepherds were Jews. These wise men were of our brethern, the Gentiles. When they had heard the king—who? why, the men who came from the east, even the Gentile strangers, who came to seek Jesus. There was a time when the knowledge of the great salvation, that is in him, reached to but very few beyond the frontiers of Judea, and the limits of the Jewish nation. But behold! here are intimations in the text, that the partition wall begins to moulder away, and that the gospel shall

shall extend from sea to sea, and from pole to pole. We had an early promise of this increase of the Messiah's government in Gen. ix. 27. where it is said—"God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." And to Abraham it was so told, that "in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Jacob prophesied that unto him, even unto Shiloh, should the gathering of the people be." Gen. xlix. 10. The calling of the Gentiles was adumbrated too by the law, by the tabernacle, and the temple. Was not the law given upon mount Sinai in Arabia? Gal. iv. 25. In Arabia the land of the Gentiles, to intimate, that the covenant, which God made with his people, was not limited to any particular spot. Was it not delivered into the hands of Moses? And may not we claim some affinity with him? Was not his wife the daughter of the priest of Midian, who was a gentile? His offspring therefore were the children of a Gentile on one side. Was not the tabernacle furnished out of the spoils of Egypt? and the Egyptians, you know, were Gentiles. Was not the temple erected on the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, and consequently on Gentile ground? were not the materials for building it brought from the land of Hiram? Nay, was not Hiram himself the chief architect? And he was one of the Gentile kings. "His father was a man of Tyre." 1 Kings, vii. 14. All these instances clearly shew, that God

gave very early hints, that the salvation, which was originally confined to the Jews, should become the inheritance of the Gentiles also. But the wise-men were not only gentiles, but they abounded in wealth: and yet they came a great way in quest of Jesus. Their wealth did not, as is often the case, render them careless, and inactive about the concerns of their souls. They were not intimidated by the length of the journey, and would yield to no repulse till they saw the infant Saviour. This should instruct us, that the wise and opulent have as much need of Jesus Christ, as the ignorant and indigent. High and low must be equally indebted to him for salvation. "There is no other name given among men, by which they can be saved." Princes, if they will enter into life, must go in at the same gate with their subjects. All—all must be alike saved by Jesus Christ, or perish. The poor shepherds came from the fields, and the wise-men from the east, to pay their homage to this friend of sinners. Whatever therefore be your condition—be you in affluent, or in narrow circumstances—be you learned, or unlearned; go, and search diligently for Jesus, and strive to lay hold on his righteousness and strength, or you are undone for ever. Here the rich and poor meet together. Both must have recourse to the same sacrifice, as was typified under the law: Exodus xxx. 15. where it is said, "the rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel,

shekel, when they give an offering to the Lord, to make an atonement for their souls." Half a shekel was the amount of the daily offering. There were other offerings, in which the rich were bound to be more liberal, as they received more than others: but the atoning sacrifice admitted of neither increase, nor diminution. It was always the same to all persons: and it prefigured that "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world:" John i. 29. even the Lamb, which John the Baptist pointed to, and which Isaiah had in his eye, when he said—"send a lamb to the ruler." Isaiah xvi. 1. No sacrifice is so acceptable to the Ruler of the universe as his own son. In him he hath declared himself well pleased, and in no other. Matt. iii. 17. If you expect salvation in any other way, or by any other means; know, and be assured, that you shall hear in the day of your distress, or in the great judgment day, words to this effect—"go, and cry to the gods, which you have chosen: let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation." Judges x. 14. that is, where are your performances, your duties wrought in your own might, your alms deeds, and your good works, upon which you placed so much dependance? where are your mere harmlessness, or abstinence from gross crimes—your outward profession, and cold formality—your cobwebbed righteousness, and fig-leaved covering? let them deliver you, if they can." They, who have the most confidence

dence in themselves, are at the greatest distance from the kingdom of God. They are whole, and Jesus is a physician. "But the whole have no need of a physician." They, whom he came to heal, have these marks upon them—they are sick of sin, they are weary of self-seeking, they are heavy laden with the bondage of corruption. These are the objects of his care. For these he hath provided an all-sufficient remedy: and on these he will bestow health, and complete salvation. But, to reduce my thoughts, on this copious subject, into some regular method, I shall consider whence the wise-men came—where they came---the end of their coming---their zeal and diligence in surmounting all difficulties which lay in their way--the success with which the Lord was pleased to crown their laborious, and persevering researches; and the season of their coming. May the holy Spirit impress what shall be advanced on our hearts, and be as a guide in our souls to lead us unto Jesus!

First, let us dwell a little on the place, from whence the wise-men took their journey. They came from the east--from a very distant country--from a land that was afar off. Two reasons may be assigned for this. 1st. They came from this remote country to see Jesus, to shew that the prophecies began to be fulfilled, which had foretold, "that the Gentiles should come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising. Lift up thine eyes round
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round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee, thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Isaiah lx. 3, 4. Many more texts might be produced to the same purpose, which incontestibly prove, according to our Lord's declaration,—“ that many shall come from the east, and from the west; and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and that peace was to be preached to them, who were afar off, as well as to those who were nigh.” Gentiles, as well as Jews, were to be gathered into one fold, under one shepherd: and lo! here the gathering begins to take place. And oh! how great and manifold are our obligations to our gracious God, for bringing us nigh who were afar off—for admitting us, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, into a share of their privileges—and for making us, who were “ strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,” partakers of the rich blessings of the gospel! Glory be to him, that it hath pleased him to break down the middle wall of partition, through the blood of Jesus, and to open a channel of communication, which shall never be again dammed up, for “ Jew, and Greek, for bond, and free, to come unto him, that they may receive forgiveness of sins through faith in his name!” 2d. The wise-men's coming from a far country to seek Jesus, should teach us, that we can never

take too much pains to come at the knowledge, and possession of Jesus Christ. Though we should spend, and be spent in the search—though it should cost us many a wearisome, and tedious journey, and we should meet with many obstacles by the way; yet if we can but find Jesus, and lay hold of him as *our* Saviour, we shall be more than amply repaid for all our trouble. To whatever toil, or inconveniencies we may be put in the pursuit, if Christ be formed in our hearts, it is the best bargain that we ever made. “But the queen of the south shall rise in judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them:” Why? because she came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and behold! a greater than Solomon is here.” Luke, xi. 31. If she did so much, and went so far to hear the wisdom of a man, though he was the wisest of men: how much more should we do, and how much farther should we go to hear, and know him, who is the wisdom of God? It is grievous to think how little value, and esteem, many have for the Lord of glory. They will not come from the next houses to seek his face. They mind no distance, and regard no weather to go to market, when the provisions of the body fail, or where their worldly business requires it: but when their souls are famishing, and food for them is to be had, without money and without price, they will not stir an inch to fetch it. O my friends! have a little

little compassion upon your poor souls. They have long been destitute of the bread of life, and are not yet supplied with it. They are pining away, and will soon be past all hopes of recovery. Oh ! suffer me to vent the anguish of my spirit, and to intercede with you in their behalf. Let them have a morsel of the heavenly manna, at least once in the week. If they had even that small pittance with relish, there would be room to hope, that they would thereby be strengthened to labour, and cry for more. Alas ! it is melancholy to consider that these wise heathens should travel so many miles to enquire after Jesus Christ, while you, who call yourselves christians, will not go a few steps to meet him in his ordinances. Oh ! I could take up a bitter lamentation over you, and weep tears of blood for your backwardness to come unto the Saviour of lost, and perishing souls. But you will say—" if you could shew him to us, we would be willing to come unto him. We would see Jesus." Would you indeed ? Then look up, and behold him far more glorious than the wise-men beheld him at Bethlehem. We shew forth the Lord Jesus to you in the glass of the gospel—not to your bodily sight but to your faith—not lying in the manger—not praying on the mount—not bleeding in the garden, or dying on the cross, but sitting in unclouded majesty on his lofty throne above. You know that if you were admitted into an elegant room, adorned with
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many beautiful landscapes and pictures; you could not see one of them, if they were all covered with a veil or curtain—but if the curtain should be drawn aside, you would have a full view of their beauty, and exquisite symmetry: so are the manifestations of Jesus Christ in the face of the gospel. They are great, and glorious in themselves; but there is such a thick veil upon the hearts of many, that they can perceive no form, or comeliness in him. Oh! beg of God to rend this veil in twain from the top to the bottom, that you may behold the excellencies of the Lord Jesus, in the sacred pages of his word, and in the assemblies of his people. I proceed

Secondly, to consider the place, to which the wise-men came in quest of Jesus. They came to Jerusalem—not indeed by the direction of the star, but by the guidance of their own reasonings. They inferred, that because Jerusalem was the metropolis of the kingdom, and the seat of the Jewish princes, they should there have full information concerning him, “who was born king of the Jews.” Here, I say, they followed their own reasonings, and therefore they found him not, whom they sought after. He cannot be discovered but by the light of his own illuminations. Reason indeed is a goodly gift, and of royal extraction: but, since the fall, it is, like Mephibosheth, lame in both its feet. He never could have gone to David, unless he had been carried
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some way or other, however desirous he might be to exculpate himself. So human reason may desire the death of the righteous—may see the right, and may approve it too—but it never doth, or will pursue it, till it is dragged, as it were, by victorious grace. “No man can come unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.” John vi. 44. So long as the wise men followed the star, they steered their course aright: but when they followed their own reasonings, they lost sight of the star, and were likely to come short of their errand, or to miss the object of their long journey. Let the blind man therefore follow his guide, though he should lead him through briars and thorns—over vales and mountains. As he cannot see himself, he must trust to another’s sight. Well; we are all blind by nature; and it is out of mere compassion, that Jesus hath sent the comforter to be our guide. Our carnal mind is not only enmity against God; but blindness itself, with respect to the things of his spirit. Blind it is, and yet it will not be beholden to the star. It will go its own way; and, “if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch.”—Our next enquiry is

Thirdly, what end had the wise men in view, when they left their native country; or, what was their inducement to take such a long and tedious journey? It was to search for Jesus Christ, and to see him. And it is no wonder. It is the wish of all God’s people to have

have a glimpse of him. "If I have found grace in thy sight," saith Moses, "shew me, I beseech thee, thy glory." Exod. xxxiii. 18. David often prays in the lxxxth psalm—
 "cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." "Abraham earnestly desired to see his glory, and he saw it, and was glad." John viii. 56. Here some may object—"are mankind willing to die? for, they cannot see God and live." True; we cannot see him, as he is God, and live: but if he will take upon him a human form, we may. We may "look upon the face of the anointed" of the father, and "live; yea, live for ever." God said—"let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" that is, after the likeness in which he would appear in the flesh. It was the desire of all nations to see God tabernacled among men: and it was from this source as may reasonably be supposed, that idolatry took its rise. The Gentiles had some traditionary notions, that such an event would take place; and hence they made themselves images, in hopes that the deity would animate and dwell in them. They were willing to have something in their sight, that corresponded with their general expectations. Be this as it may when the fullness of time was come, 'God sent forth his son in the likeness of human flesh,' and in him our utmost desire of seeing God may be satisfied. He is the express image of his person. As the great Immanuel made the blind man to see by apply-
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ing clay to his eyes ; so he hath made himself visible to men, on this side of eternity, by putting on a body of clay like our bodies. Oh ! who would not wish to see this God man, whose heart is made of tenderness, and whose bowels yearn at human woe ? Oh ! how desirable is such an appropriating view of him, as enables the soul to lay hold on him as all its salvation, and all its desire ; this is such a sight as throws a dimness over all other objects. Nothing, after it, is worth observing. When old Simeon had the infant Saviour in his arms, he cried out in an extacy —“ Now Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word :” which is, as if he had said, “ Now eyes be closed, and open no more in this world : you have seen all that is here worthy of your notice. Jesus.—the long expected Jesus is come, and I have embraced him as my salvation.” So do you, my beloved friends, labour to get a sight of Jesus in your souls by faith. Leave the worldlings to pursue their earthly profits—the covetous to set their hearts on their wealth—the carnal to indulge their animal appetites, and the wanton to wallow in sensual pleasures : but do you indefatigably seek for Jesus Christ, till he whispers unto you—“ go in peace, your sins are forgiven.” Give not over the pursuit till you attain a clear evidence of your adoption into his family. It is no small recommendation of the women, who went early to our Lord’s sepulchre, to hear the angel declare

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unto them—"I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified." Are the angels witnesses this day, that this is your desire and mine? Oh! it would be a pleasant sight both to good angels, and to good men, to observe our thoughts, and affections running out after the Lord Jesus, and our whole conduct plainly testifying, that we seek him with our whole hearts. Here therefore it may not be amiss to lay down a few motives which may, under the influence of divine grace, quicken our ardour, and redouble our diligence in thus seeking after him.

1. He seeks us. "The son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Did he come to seek us? Then let us seek him, and be inconsolable till we find him. When a lamb is missing, and the shepherd goes in search for it; the poor lamb also is searching for its dam, and, as it wanders, it bleats and cries, saying in effect to all who hear it—"Oh! shew me the way home. Help me to return to the pasture, from which I have strayed." O my soul! "as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks; so do thou pant after thy God." Attend him in his ordinances. Pray, meditate, hear the word and take no rest or denial, until thou hast found him, whom thou lovest. Plead with the psalmist, thine undone condition if thou art left to thyself; and urge thy suit in his words. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." Psalm cxix. 176. 2 We should seek

seek the Lord Jesus because in him is treasured up every rich and precious grace, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Col. i. 19. There is no grace, that we do or can need, but what is centered in him; and he is ever ready to bestow it upon us, as our various necessities may require. He is the general treasury of his church. No sooner did the spouse in the Canticles begin to commend her Bridegroom, and to recount his sweet, and endearing qualities, but immediately the daughters of Jerusalem were struck with his excellencies and enquired, saying—"whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women, whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?" In like manner, when we are told of the infinite treasures of grace and glory, which are laid up in Christ Jesus, we should be stirred up to seek him, and to strain every nerve till we have found him, and can call him *our* beloved—till we can receive out of his fulness all things pertaining to life and godliness. But the motive, which one would think should have the most weight with sinners in stirring them up to seek after the Lord Jesus Christ is 3. This: he bestows his salvation as a free gift. Where is the man who, when he hears that a kingdom hath been bequeathed to him, would not immediately ask—"where is it?" or, who, after having received proper information concerning it, would not set out to take possession of it with all possible speed?

Well; have not we been told, that the Lord Jesus hath purchased an eternal kingdom for us? Is it not a truth, which we cannot gainsay, that he is willing to give it freely unto us? And shall we be indifferent about it? Is it not worth our seeking after? O shame to us! that we should be more anxious to secure a passing shadow, or a feeling phantom than we are to obtain, and possess the most substantial realities. Blush sinners at your past folly, and turn unto the Lord with your whole hearts. O run unto him without delay; if you cannot run, walk: if you cannot walk, creep towards him, "while it is day, before the night cometh, in which no man can work." The next point that deserves our attention, is,

Fourthly, the diligence of the wisemen in seeking the king of the Jews, and their zeal in surmounting all difficulties, which lay in their way. When they could not find him at Jerusalem, they did not give up the pursuit; but eagerly sought him elsewhere. They would not return without their errand. They met however with two very discouraging circumstances, viz. bad success, and ill example—circumstances, which have a strong tendency to retard the weak, and quite to dispirit the faint. They thought within themselves—"surely we shall have some account of him at Jerusalem?" But they were exceedingly wrong in their conclusions, as the event soon proved. They could meet with none in that city,

city, who could give them any intelligence about him. This would have been enough to deter thousands in our days from any further search. Hearing that the authorised ministers of the word, or the public instructors of the people, knew nothing of Jesus Christ, they would readily excuse themselves and say—"if these men of learning, who are set apart and ordained to teach the way of God in truth, are utterly unacquainted with Jesus Christ: why should we be anxious to come at the knowledge of him? If it were absolutely necessary to salvation, surely they would have been the first persons, who had been blessed with it: seeing therefore that they are strangers to the Saviour; what need have we to take so much pains to enquire after him? they must be better informed about this matter than we are." Softly and fairly my good friends, be not so hasty in your determinations. In just displeasure against you, and as a heavy judgment upon you, it is that the Lord hath permitted you to have such ministers among you as will countenance you in your sloth, and neglect of Jesus—as depreciate his merits, and speak lightly of his grace, as a sanctifying principle—as run with you into every excess of riot, are the foremost to lead the dance, to circulate the glass, to promote your time killing pastimes, and to encourage every species of dissipation. When these go to heaven, the most ungodly wretch may go thither too with all his guilty imper-

sections on his head. But I suspect that neither will find admittance there in a hurry. Nay I am sure that neither will be suffered to breathe that salubrious air, till they shall have experienced a thorough change both in their principles and practices. All ministers do not fall under this censure. I only speak of the unawakened among them, who have had no call to the ministry but the capricious designation of partial friends or fond parents; and have received no gift but the tythes. Of all such, to whatever denomination they may belong, or over whatever congregations they may preside, I may safely say with the old British bard—That

To set the blind to lead the blind,
To set the dull to instruct mankind,
To set th' unskill'd to shew the way
From dark despair to perfect day;
Is not the spirit's ordination,
But a mere human innovation,
Which loudly calls for reformation.

The wisemen soon left Jerusalem, when they could not meet with Jesus there, They turned their backs upon it without regret, and hastened to seek him in some other place. This should greatly encourage us to hold fast our profession, and not to stagger on account of our present weak attainments. If we succeed not in finding the Lord to day, let us renew the attempt to-morrow with greater vigour,

vigour, and earnestness. If our sins be not mortified at first, let us not be disheartened; but wait in expectation of a complete victory over them. "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters; and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so let our eyes wait upon the Lord our God"—how long? for a year or two? For a hundred or more? No: how long then must we wait? "until he have mercy upon us." Psalm cxxiii. 2. But you will say,—*when* will that happy time arrive? who can tell whether it will ever be present or not?" Man! be not rash with thy mouth—blaspheme not the God of heaven. Hath he not said—"that he, who seeketh findeth." But you will answer—"many seek, who do not find." No; not one if he understands what seeking means. "What! is it not written, Luke xiii. 24. that many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able?" True. But observe the tense or time. It is not said, that they do *now* seek, but that they *will* seek at some future hour—in the agonies of death, or when they shall appear before their final judge. Oh! this seeking will not do. There is such a thing as reprobation. Seeking only, and at any time, will not bring you to glory. If you do not seek so as to enter into the life of Christ here, you shall not dwell with him hereafter. Men's reprobation is at the gate of heaven. For all wish, with Balazm, to be admitted among the righteous in the other world.

world; however they may dislike their society in this. But in the kingdom of grace there is no rejection. For how can they be rejected who do not seek? how can any be denied an alms, if they never ask for it? Seek therefore my dear people, seek, and seek again, until you obtain mercy—until the holy spirit witness with your spirits, that you are the children of God.” “Though he tarry, wait for him; because he will surely come, he will not tarry.” Hab. ii. 3. “Be not weary in well doing; for in due time you shall reap, if you faint not.” Gal. vi. 9. They, who have grace to persevere to the end, or to be faithful unto death are sure to receive the crown. Look back to the Jewish church, and recollect how it happened unto her. “On her bed she sought him, whom her soul loved: but she found him not. She arose, and went about the streets of the city: she met the watchmen and was wounded by them. Yet still she pressed on, unawed by their threatnings, and undismayed by her bruises. She would not return, or decline the search. Forward she marched—but not far before her toil was well repaid. She found him whom she sought after; she brought him into her mother’s house, and secured his future residence in her bosom.” Cant. iii. 1—4. Thus ought we all to act: though it should please God not to bless our labour to day, yet we should begin it afresh tomorrow, and press on with alacrity, till we attain the blessing. They who seek

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Jesus, shall find him. Though we should toil a long while, and he should hide, as it were his face from us; yet sooner or later he will assuredly come to our relief—perhaps at the fourth watch of the night, or at the dawning of the day—in the season of affliction, or at the approach of our dissolution. He will not always be unmindful of his covenant. But alas! how soon is the patience of men wearied out! If they be not rewarded in their own time, they scruple not to judge the Lord himself, unworthy of any service. We read in Haggai i. that the Jews, who had begun to build their temple, after their return from the captivity, laid aside that work, when they were threatened by their enemies; and excused themselves, saying,—“the time is not come: the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” But what was the consequence? why, the Lord was angry with them, and blasted all their undertakings; so that “when they had sown much they brought in but little: when they did eat, they were not satisfied: when they drank, they were not filled with drink: when they were clothed, they were not warm: and when they had earned wages, they put it into a bag with holes.” David brought the ark of God some part of the way to Jerusalem with joy: but when he saw Uzzah smitten for putting his hand to hold it, when the oxen stumbled, he stopped short—and “was displeased, because the Lord made a breach upon Uzzah.”

1 Chron.

1 Chron. xiii. 11 He would not bring it into the city. This was his crime, and it proved his punishment: for as his faith was too weak to entrust himself wholly into the hands of God; the blessing was transferred from his house, to the family of Obed edom. We may hence not only learn, how impatient mankind are of the least repulse, and how soon they grow peevish and fretful, if matters do not succeed exactly according to their mind: but also, that we ought to be found in the path of duty, notwithstanding any obstructions, which may be thrown in our way, or to follow hard after the Lord until we find him, though thousands should fall on our right hand and on our left. We are informed Gen. xxvi. 19, that Isaac's "servants digged in the vally, and found there a well of springing water." It is probable, that they digged many fathoms deep without discovering any water at all. Still however they digged on, till at last they found water, yea, a well of fine clear running water. So though we may labour hard and dig deep to come at the consolations of the gospel, and all without effect for a long while; yet let us press on and never take any rest until we drink of the living stream, which flows from Jesus Christ. This will allay our utmost thirst, and far surpass our expectations. It will be a "well of water in us springing into everlasting life." — Another discouragement, which the wise men met with, was the evil example which they

they saw. When they came to Jerusalem to enquire after Jesus, all the inhabitants of that holy city were otherwise engaged. They knew nothing of him. Nay, the very scribes and pharisees, who being acute men, and learned in the law, might be supposed to expect the Messiah at that very time, would give them no information about him. They were too indolent, or too much devoted to Herod to look for another king. Let them alone: if they will not step over the threshold to seek Jesus, we shall see who will: yea, will begrudge no pains to find him. The wisemen not discouraged at their remissness, though perhaps justly shocked at it, leave them to their learned slumbers, and resolutely march on alone in search of the infant king. This should teach us not to follow the example of any but just so far as they follow the example of Jesus Christ. It is better to go to heaven alone, than to go to hell in a crowd. It is said, Mark v. 18. "that the man, out of whom our Lord cast a legion of devils, prayed that he might be with Jesus." Though the whole country besought him to depart out of their coasts; yet this man would not follow the example of his countrymen, however it might be backed by numbers, or enforced by their authority. So shouldest thou O man, if the Lord had healed thy spiritual maladies, or dispossessed the devil of his strong hold in thy heart, follow the lamb whithersoever he goes, though it should expose thee to the frowns

frowns of the world, or the storms of persecution. Like a live fish thou must swim after him in direct opposition to the torrent of nature, and all the floods of temptation, which would carry thee down into the great deep. Joshua resolved, and doubtless fulfilled his resolution, that "he, and his household would serve the Lord; whatever others might do." And some of the Israelites nobly said, Micah iv. 5. "though all people should walk every one in the name of his god, yet will we walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever." It is a distinguished privilege to be so rooted and grounded in the faith as to be steadfast and immoveable in our attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ—neither awed by the threatnings, nor seduced by the blandishments of a corrupt and degenerate age. Indeed, my friends, we have need to examine narrowly on what foundation we stand, because evil examples are like a land-flood, or any sudden inundation, which drives before it all that hath no root, or is not too heavy to be borne away with all the current. All unsound professors, whether they be assuming formalists, or designing hypocrites, have as much religion as happens to be in fashion and no more. Having no abiding principle of grace in their hearts, they swim with the tide, and are too pliable to resist the force of the prevailing mode. Well! well! if they will follow a multitude to do evil, and rush headlong into destruction in spite of all the means which are used to save them,

them, they do not deserve our pity. If they do perish. We cannot help it. Their blood shall be required at their own hands.—But the wisemen not only left the learned Sanhedrim, the wise Scribe and the haughty Pharisee; but they would not even tarry at Jerusalem, when they could not find the Saviour there: though it was a noble city, the paragon of all nations, and the joy of the whole earth; yet there was nothing in it, that could attract their attention, or court their stay, while Jesus was absent from it. This should likewise teach us to bid adieu to every place in which a favour of God and of the things of God is not to be found. If the name of Jesus be not as ointment poured forth in it, we must quit it, how delectable soever it may be in other respects, or with whatever plenty of temporal good things it may abound. “Isaac said, my father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering.” Gen. xxii. 7. So when men pass from place to place, and from city to city, and are led to admire the pleasantness of their situation, the richness of the soil, the salubrity of the air, and the wholesomeness of the waters around them: let them ask, before they pronounce the conveniencies of the lovely spot compleat—“where is the Lamb? where is the gospel preached? have the glad tidings of a Saviour reached it, or is it still the gloomy haunt of superstition, the dark recess of idolatry, or the public receptacle of vice

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and immorality?" In like manner, when a man or a maid servant comes into a family, where there is good fare, and a fair prospect of kind usage from the heads of it, they should yet enquire—"where is the Lamb of God? where is prayer? where are the reading of the scriptures, and the like means of grace, in the use of which we may be made wise unto salvation?" In a word, as the wise men withdrew themselves from the celebrated city of Jerusalem when they could not find Jesus there; so should each of us, whatever be our outward condition, retreat as fast as we can from the tents of ungodliness, however inviting they may be to nature, or alluring with regard to worldly accommodations. We should arise and say—"this is no proper habitation for me." And neither resting in our duties, nor placing any confidence in any of our performances—not even in this retiring from the society of the wicked and profane, we should with a single eye seek Jesus, and never rest till he is formed in us, as the hope of glory, and we have a well grounded testimony in our consciences, that we shall dwell with him in his tabernacle above for ever. This leads me

Fifthly, to consider the success, with which the Lord was pleased to crown the persevering researches, and undaunted efforts of the wise men. I thought they had received no instruction at Jerusalem concerning the object of their journey; and no man had the curiosity

to accompany them in their search after Jesus; yet they had not gone far from that city, "when lo! the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, and stood over where the young child was." Oh! what an encouragement is this for us, to put ourselves wholly under the guidance of the holy spirit—to watch his motions, and observe his drawings. As soon as he excites in us a sincere desire after the knowledge of the truth, we may be sure that we too shall have directions *how* and *where* that desire shall be satisfied. Yea, though we may wander out of the way, and may seem to be enveloped in the darkness of our own reasonings; yet we no sooner simply listen to the voice of God within us, than our sky brightens, and the heavenly luminaries lend their radiant beams to conduct us in the right track. The Lord will always accomplish what he hath begun. Wherever he is the "author, there he is the finisher of faith." Heb. xii. 2. He gradually unfolds the mysteries of his grace, as we advance in the divine life, and continually amplifies the manifestations of himself, as we are able to bear them. The stream may be small at its source, but it swells as it flows, and is enlarged unto the end of its course by the influx of fresh springs. When the Israelites first came out of Egypt, they had only Moses and Aaron for their guides: but afterwards the Lord sent them "a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night" Yea, the angel of the covenant

himself went before the armies of Israel, and led them safe till they came to the land of Canaan. When the eunuch was reading the scripture, the spirit of God laid his sweet constraints on Philip to expound it unto him, or to explain what he read. When he had grace to read, he soon had further grace to understand. The almighty and allwise God generally thus deals with his creatures. "To him who hath it shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." The bible is replete with instances of this kind. The godly women, who wanted to see Jesus, rose early and came to the sepulchre; but as they came, they were sorely distressed about the stone, which was laid upon the grave's mouth. The puzzling question among them was—"who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre." But when they looked, they saw that the stone was already rolled away, and that an angel had been dispatched from heaven to do that kindly office for them. Behold, how ready is our gracious God to bless the feeble attempts of his people—to blow the smouldering flax into a flame, and to further any good design, which his blessed spirit may have begun to work in them. I hasten now in the

• Last place, to make a few remarks on the time in which the wise men came to seek Jesus. It was when Herod was king. But why was this circumstance recorded in the gospel? It was—to remind us, that the kingdom of

of Christ is not of this world. He was born when the throne of Judea was possessed by another person, to whom he had no claim of kindred. It is true, that he was born a king: for, thus runs the enquiry of the wise men—"where is he who is born king of the Jews?" Matt. ii. 2. And in another place when he stood before Pilate, and was asked—"art thou a king?" he answered—"to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." A King he is, and verily he is a great King—"King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." But his kingdom is different from the kingdoms of this world. It is not a temporal, but a spiritual kingdom. This should teach us to moderate our wishes after earthly grandeur, and not "receive honour one of another; but to covet that honour which cometh from God only." In the words of Jeremiah to Baruch, we should say to ourselves, whenever we perceive our vain hearts swelling with pride, or exulting in the prospect of worldly advancement—"seekest thou great things for thy self? seek them not." Jesus did not come into this world to be "ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for sinners." And it should be our aim not to be great, but to be useful in our generation—not to be distinguished by our wealth and splendor, but by our meek and lowly spirit, which is the characteristic of all true christians. For the Lord loveth the righteous, in whatever station they

are placed, and shews no respects to the mere persons of the great. Lazarus, though he had often here none but dogs for his companions, was yet dearer unto God than Dives with all his pomp, and amidst his whole train of flatterers. This is not the home of the people of God. Their rest is yet to come. Why then should we treasure up for ourselves treasures upon earth, "where moth and rust do corrupt?" Alas! what a slur doth this cast upon human greatness? The very *rust* devours the possession of the great, and eats, like a canker into the heart of those idols, to which many pay the most servile adoration. What then will the *worm* do, whose ravages are far more destructive? Better therefore it is for us, my precious souls, to lay up our treasures in heaven, where "neither moth nor rust do corrupt," than to reach the highest pinnacle of fame, and aggrandisement upon earth, if that be our only potion.

2. Jesus Christ was born when Herod was king, and the affairs of the Jews were reduced to the greatest perplexity, to shew us that he is a brother born for adversity. Jacob had foretold that the scepter should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh should come; or that the Messiah should not be born, until a strange king should reign over the Jews, and their state should be utterly destitute of inferior resources. It is usual with the blessed Immanuel, not to appear

appear in his presence, in his power, and in his goodness, until things are at the lowest ebb. He would not go to Bethany till "Lazarus" had been dead four days. He would not go to his disciples, who were toiling all night in the midst of the sea, and in danger every moment of being drowned till the fourth watch, or near the dawn of the morning. So it was not his time to come into the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, till Herod should be king, and all other methods had proved abortive. When matters were at the worst, then he came. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. While we have any other prop to lean upon, that is not the season of his coming, but when all human helps fail, and we are almost sinking in despair, then he lifts us out of the miry clay, and sets our feet upon a rock. He saith himself—John ii. 4. "my hour is not yet come." But when will it come? when the wine is all spent. It was then that he displayed the power of his might. When we have a father and mother to provide for us, he will often pass by us, and leave us to their care: but "when father and mother forsake us, then the Lord will take us up." Psalm lxxviii. 5. He will not be called a father to them who have other fathers, but the father of the fatherless is his name. For them "he keeps his mercy for evermore." Though therefore he may long withhold his succour from; yet he will not withhold it too long. He doth not reserve his kindness till

till we are dead, but till we are almost dead with the anguish of his absence. Jesus is a friend that loveth at all times : but he doth most peculiarly manifest his love in the hour of distress.

Having dwelled so long upon every branch of this copious subject, I shall now conclude the whole with only two practical uses.

1. Behold the goodness of the Lord in sending some directions to all his people, and admire it. He sent an angel to preach the gospel to the shepherds, and a multitude of the heavenly host to sing their melodious anthem after sermon, and both made such an impression on the shepherds that ' they went in haste to Bethlehem to see the thing, that was come to pass, which the Lord had made known to them'. He sent a star to guide the wisemen of the east to the place where Jesus was. Blessed be God ! we too have many a star to direct us to the Saviour. The Bible is not only a star, which gives light to our paths ; but is a lamp to our feet. Faithful ministers are stars in the right hand of God : and above all, is the holy Ghost the comforter, who testifies of Jesus, that he is the blessed ' sun of righteousness ' arisen upon the sin sick benighted world, ' with healing in his wings'. This is not a star, but an emanation from the sun itself, whose gracious office it is to lead us into all truth. This is the Spirit ' which knoweth all things'. Our own spirit is not a star, but the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.' Prov. xx.

27. It knows a little relating to this world: but touching the things of God, it is entirely ignorant. But the holy Spirit 'searcheth the deep things of God, and revealeth them unto babes.' May we all be the subjects of his teaching, that, under the various guidance of these precious gifts, we may be brought to the knowledge of him, whom to know is eternal life! 2. We may learn from what hath been said, to come at some certainty whether we love the Lord Jesus Christ or not. Do we sing with the angels,—“glory to God in the highest?” do we, with the shepherds, ‘make known abroad the saying, that was told concerning Jesus,’ are we with the wise-men, glad that we have found him, and do we, ‘rejoice with exceeding great joy,’ that we have felt the power of his grace in our souls? Or, we are, with Herod, and all Jerusalem, troubled at the very supposition of his birth, and filled with enmity at the mention of his name? By these marks we may easily know, whether we are his friends or his enemies. The men of this world are always disturbed at the success of the gospel of Christ. When religion actually takes root, and flourishes in the hearts of any, there is a never failing cause of grief and envy—to whom; to Herod, to drunkards, to worldlings, to adulterers, and to all the workers of iniquity without exception. They cannot endure it. Their rage is so kindled against Jesus, and all his adherents, that they would cheer-

cheerfully extirpate them from the face of the earth. Now, declare the truth — do you exult in the prosperity of Christ's kingdom? or, are you uneasy at its progress in the world? If you are disquieted and pained at the thought, this is a full proof that you have an evil heart, or that you are possessed of the heart and disposition of Herod. Why was he troubled at the wise men's enquiry after him who was born king of the Jews? why, because he was an usurper, and his conscience suggested to him that he had much to fear, if he should be called to an account of his tyrannical and abominable deeds. As the devils besought Jesus not to torment them before the time: so he was willing to put off the evil day a little longer. He was loath to be hurried so soon into his own place. But granting that Herod was a notoriously bad man — why did all Jerusalem enter into his measures, and share in his griefs, and fears? why were they troubled with him? was not Jesus born to be their Saviour and deliverer? Yes, but as they expected only a temporal prince, they were apprehensive that he could not ascend the throne without great bloodshed and opposition; and that they could not espouse his part without exposing themselves to great hardships and sufferings: so they chose rather to lose Christ, and all the benefits of his incarnation, than run the risk of injuring their worldly interests, or endangering their personal ease. And alas! are there not many in our days who

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are actuated by the same principles and motives? They have just as much religion as is fashionable, and puts them to no outward inconveniencies. Nay, are there not multitudes among us, who like the Gadarenes, love their swine more than they love the company of Jesus Christ, or prefer their pleasures, their profits, and idle amusements before the riches of his grace. This sin hath been epidemical in every age. Men may not dislike religion at a distance, or so far as it consists of forms and ceremonies; but when it comes near home, and offers to lay its restraints on their lusts—to debar them of their beloved gratifications, and to strike at the root of their false peace, they beg it to be gone, and desire to have no fellowship with it. They would sooner lose Christ and the joys of heaven, than part with their idols, or be deprived of their earthly delights. We read in John xi. 47. that the “chief priests and pharisees gathered a counsel together to consult how they might kill Jesus.” But under what pretence would they kill him? Oh! under the old pretence of self-interest and self-preservation. For they said among themselves—“if we let him alone, all men will believe in him; and the Romans will come, and destroy us and our nation.” Short sighted politicians! instead of averting, they took the only method to bring on the very doom which they so much dreaded. Oh! let us learn wisdom from their folly. Having their dreadful punishment before

before our eyes, let us beware of their sin. Tracing their crime through that series of unparalleled wretchedness, in which it involved themselves, and as it still affects their posterity; let us not crucify the Lord of glory, but welcome him into our souls. Seeing we call ourselves christians, let us not put him to an open shame by our sins, or cry out with the Jews—"away with him! away with him!" but let us pray without ceasing that his throne may be established in our hearts, and that his kingdom may extend from pole to pole. Amen! come Lord Jesus!

S E R M O N VII.

Christ is all, and in all.

Heb. i. 9. *Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the Oil of gladness above thy Fellows.*

IN the beginning of this chapter, the apostle having shewn that "God, who had communicated his will to the church of old, at sundry times and in divers manners, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son;" goes on to describe the surpassing excellencies of this glorious personage who had appeared in human form. "He is," says he, the heir of all things—the brightness of the father's glory, and the express image of his person." He then proves his infinite pre-eminence above the highest of the angelic hosts from those scriptures, which the Jews, to whom he wrote this epistle, admitted to be of divine authority. "Unto which of the angels said God at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. But

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unto the Son, as their eternal King, he saith, thy throne O God, who art the essential Jehovah, is for ever and ever. A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast the most indisputed title to reign. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God in covenant, as the incarnate Saviour, hath anointed thee, to thy mediatorial office, with the oil of gladness, or the most immeasurable fulness of spiritual gifts and graces, above thy fellows, and in a manner, different from that in which *they* are anointed with oil, to whom thou hast brought thyself on a level, in some respects by assuming their nature." By the phrase, "God even thy God," we are to understand God the Father, who anoints God the Son. "God and God, Lord and Lord," are phrases frequently used in holy writ, as in Psalm cx. 1. "The Lord said unto my Lord:" and in Gen. xix. 24. "The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrhah brimstone and fire, from the Lord out of heaven." By "oil" is meant the holy ghost. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek." Isaiah lxi. 1. Such is the poverty of all languages, that it is not easy to find words properly descriptive of spiritual objects. Hence it is the constant usage of scripture to represent spiritual by material things, and to express the wonders of God's love to mankind, and the process of his grace in their souls, by

terms.

terms borrowed from sensible ideas, and the visible creation. For instance: the Holy Ghost and his influences are called rivers of water,—the comforter—the finger of God—the earnest of our inheritance,” and, in my text, “the Oil of gladness.” And indeed this last is a very proper emblem of the spirit for various reasons. Oil will not easily mix, or incorporate with other ingredients: so the spirit of God is holy, and separated from all creatures in his nature, though he is essentially present every where. Oil swims at the top, so did the spirit of God “move upon the face of the water.” Oil supples that which is hardened and grown inflexible, so doth the spirit soften our callous and stiff hearts. Oil assuages wounds and sores, and mitigates their raging pains: so doth the spirit heal our wounded consciences, and alleviate the bitter remorse of our awakened minds. By “gladness” are to be understood the fruits of the spirit, such as “love, joy, peace.” &c. Gal. v. 22. The oil of the world cannot make the face to shine while the heart is sad; but the holy ghost can give us that “merry heart, which maketh a chearful countenance.” Prov. xv. 13. By “thy fellows” are signified those kings, priests, and prophets who partake of the same spirit with Christ, and have been partly anointed with the same unction—yea, all true christians, who have been made kings and priests unto God,” or have “received an unction from the holy one.” Our Lord hath

two natures: so have the members of his church in some degree. As the infinite Jehovah, he hath a divine nature—"Awake O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." Zech. xiii. 7. As the Son of man, and the Redeemer of a lost world, he hath a human nature—"forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Heb. ii. 14. O astonishing! what a happy coalition of parties is here! Behold God the father, anointing God the son, with the oil of gladness, or with the Holy Ghost, *above* his fellows, that its dropping may descend on their heads and hearts. This hath God done for us men, and for our salvation. "Jesus—being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, is ready, and hath full authority to shed him abroad abundantly upon us." Here let us pause, and wonder and adore. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath bestowed on him such an overflowing measure of his spirit, that he hath still a fund in store, out of which he may copiously supply his friends and followers, according to their several wants. "God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." In discoursing farther upon these words, I propose to enquire

First,

First, what is implied by the anointing spoken of — ‘God hath anointed thee.’

Secondly, what was the end or intent of our Lord’s being anointed — ‘God hath anointed thee, not only for above, but for the use and benefit of thy fellows.’ And then I shall draw some suitable inferences upon the whole. May our hearts be kept in a praying frame, while I expatiate on each of these particulars, that we may receive a blessing from above, and be fill’d with the oil of gladness.

The ceremony of *anointing* under the law, implied, that the persons to be anointed, should be separated by God for that work or calling, to which they were appointed — should have a meerness for their office, and should have holy oil actually poured upon them. Now, the anointing of our Lord had peculiar reference to these three things.

I. He, who was anointed under the law, was chosen, and set apart by God for the employment, to which he was appointed. So was the Lord Jesus, as mediator, predestinated by the ‘determinate council and foreknowledge of God’ to the weighty business of redeeming and saving sinful man. He did not thrust himself into the office as a usurper; but he took it upon him, according to the express appointment of the Father. As “no man taketh, or ought to take, the honour of the priesthood unto himself, but he who was called of God, as was Aaron: so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high

priest, but he, who said unto him, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, gave him his office. He did not snatch it by force, but he was deliberately called to it." "I am not come of myself," saith he to the Jews, "but he, who sent me, is true, whom you know not." John vii. 28. And Peter, soon after *his* death, lets them "assuredly know, that God had made that Jesus, whom they crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts ii. 36. Now, what should we learn from the Lord Jesus's not taking upon him a charge so important, and a work so absolutely necessary, as the salvation of lost souls, till he was commissioned to it by the Father? Doubtless it should teach us to be very cautious, that we engage not in any service, until it be given us of God. We read in the gospel, of a person who came unto Christ, to request him "to divide the inheritance between him and his brother." But what was our Lord's reply? He said unto him—"man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?" Luke xii. 13, 14. In all probability, this was only an eccho of what he knew to be the sentiments of the Jews, who were ready, upon hearing the question proposed, to say in their hearts, as one of their brethren had before said unto Moses—"who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" Acts vii. 27. He could have performed the part of a judge as well as that of a physician; and could have terminated suits at law, as happily as he did *cases*.

eases. But this was not his commission. So he left it to those, whose province it was to decide and determine on such temporary disputes. Here we see how circumspectly he walked. He gave offence willingly to none. He kept to the sphere allotted to him. What then shall we say of those, who obtrude themselves into other men's matters, or, with Peter, pry into their concerns? You know how he, when our Lord was informing him of some events which should happen unto him in his latter days, instead of attending to what related only to himself, glanced his eye at John, and asked—"what shall this man do." Upon which he received this answer, mixed with a tender reproof—"what is that to thee? cease to be so curiously inquisitive into the affairs of others, and follow thou me. Mind thy own business. Be diligent in thy own calling." John xxi. 21, 22. When a river keeps within its banks, and gently glides along in its proper channel, its waters are clear and fit for any use; but when it overflows its banks, it collects mud and filth, and its waters become unwholesome. So whilst we keep within the limits assigned us, all goes well with us; but when we break out of the path of duty, and stray beyond the bounds of our own calling, we are sure to gather much corruption, and where *that* reigns, there can be no felicity: it must be both hurtful to ourselves, and contaminating to others. O that we would all take Jesus for our pattern, as well

well as our teacher, for then we should learn of him to be contented with our lot and useful in our respective stations. The reason why the people of God, whose conduct is for our instruction recorded in scripture, were more successful in their undertakings than we are, is this: they never undertook any thing till they saw their calling to it clear. "God said moreover unto Moses, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel; the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you." *Exod. xiii. 15.* David was assured that "God had made him the head of the heathen." *Psalms xviii. 43.* Jeremiah speaking of himself, declares—"as for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee." *Jer. xvii. 16.* And Amos is not ashamed to own before the king Amaziah—"I am no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. And the Lord took me, as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, go, prophesy unto my people Israel." *Amos vii. 14, 15.* And this plain shepherd was far more successful in his ministry, than the priests of Bethel—Why? because he had been sent of God.

2. The anointing under the law signified, that the persons to be anointed had a meetness for their office, and were furnished with every gift and grace, which were needful for the becoming discharge of it. Hence Jesus is called

called Christ, that is, the anointed. The gifts and graces of the spirit were poured out upon him without measure. He was not a weak, but a powerful Saviour. He had strength equal to his vast designs. One faith in Isaiah iii. 7. "make me not a ruler of the people; for in my house is neither bread nor cloathing." It is highly requisite that princes should be rich, because if they are poor, they will, instead of assisting, be continually oppressing their subjects, and wresting them out of the little which they possess. But with Jesus this was not the case: for though he was poor upon earth, and had not where to lay his head, yet the fulness of the Godhead dwelled in him bodily; and we, through his poverty may be made rich. He was every way fitted for his work. He had every accomplishment both human and divine, that could qualify him for the arduous task of human redemption. Our help was not laid upon one, who would faint with toil, or be wearied with the fatigue of action. No, no, but it was laid on one who was mighty, yea, almighty to save—who, being indefatigable in his zeal, and irresistible in his power, pressed to new victories, and is still going on from conquering to conquer. As Sampson rose at midnight and carried the gates of Gaza to the top of a high hill, that was many miles distant from that city, so did our victorious Redeemer arise from the grave, like a giant refreshed with wine; and, having spoiled the territories of death

death and hell, he ascended in triumph into heaven, where he “ ever liveth to save, to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him, and to make unremitting intercession for them.” Heb. vii. 25. We do not depend upon one who is likely to sink under his burden. Our high priest is different—very different from the high priests of old. He is omnipotent, and “ chosen out of the people.” Honey and milk are under his tongue, and his lips drop balm. His words are faithfulness and truth. Before him the powers of darkness flee abashed, and sin and destruction are conquered foes. Oh! what solid comfort should it yield every weak believer to think, that his Lord is able to accomplish what he hath undertaken, and to finish what he hath begun. It was the consolation of the leper that Jesus could, if he would, make him clean. Matt. viii. 2. Soul! thou hast a God to deal with, who is worthy of thy trust. His willingness to help thee is as great as his power; and both are infinite. Seeing he is almighty, rest on his all sufficiency, and put an entire confidence in his mercy. Let the unbelieving world run here and there for support under their trials, and lament their repeated disappointments. But let us, who believe that none but Jesus can be our adequate portion, rely upon him, and by our cheerful resignation to his will, shew unto others, where alone true joys are to be found. To whatever hardship we may be exposed,

let us still lean upon him. He can preserve Moses in an ark of bull-rushes, as safe as Noah in an ark of Gopher wood. He, "who sendeth embassadors by the sea even in vessels of bull-rushes," can deliver by means, without means, and in opposition to means. "If therefore he be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Our salvation being in his hands, is secure. We are kept by his mighty power. 1 Pet. i. 5. In the time of man's innocency, Adam's happiness was in his own keeping. It was committed to his care, and he lost it. But now the Lord Jesus hath the management of our salvation, and he can ensure it—because he is greater than all, and none can pluck us out of his hands. Believer! hear, and understand—all thy enemies, which disturb or distress thee, shall be destroyed every one. Jesus will bruise them shortly under thy feet, and place thee beyond the reach of their darts for ever.

3. The persons, who, under the law, were set apart for any office, and judged qualified to execute it, were actually anointed with material oil. "Samuel took a phial of oil, and poured it upon the head of Saul." 1 Sam. x. 1. "The young prophet poured oil on the head of Jehu." 2 Kings ix. 6. But the chief captain of our salvation was not anointed with material oil, but with the holy ghost, and the plentitude of his graces, of which the material oil was only a type and shadow.

shadow. This is the true oil, which softens the heart of stone, and renders it susceptible of divine impressions. A little of this oil will make the key to turn in the old and rusty lock. When this oil is poured on our sleepy consciences, it will rouse and quicken us to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." There will be no need to drive away the birds from the sacrifice; because it will be, in itself so hot, that no bird, though it should come from hell, will bear to touch it. Of Sampson it is said, Judges xiv. 6. "that when the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him," he performed great and valiant exploits. And of the disciples we read, Acts ii. 3. that when "the spirit appeared unto them, like cloven tongues, as of fire, and sat upon each of them," they were instantly capable of proclaiming the wonderful works of God in many languages. When the spirit of God descended upon Saul, even he, to the great astonishment of all who heard him, prophesied. 1 Sam. xix. 23. Ye slow-paced snails! who can neither bear the heat, nor altogether escape it, beg of God to give you some of the efficacious influence of his spirit, and your souls, "before ever you are aware, shall be made like the chariots of Aminadab." Cant. vi. 12. This oil cheers the heart far better than any thing else beneath the sky. The worldling may rejoice in his gains, and the libertine may exult in his sensual delights: but the pleasures of both are only momentary,
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and have always a sting *that attends them*. But he, who receives a drop of this oil, rejoices in the love and favour of God with a joy, that never palls or decays, but is ever fresh and growing. It puts more gladness into the heart, than *they* knew in the time when their schemes were most prosperous, and “their corn and their wine increased” to their utmost wish. Psalm iv. 7. The eunuch, when he had tasted of this oil, “went on his way rejoicing.” Acts viii. 39. The city of Samaria, when the word came to it in the demonstration of the Spirit, “was glad.” Paul and Silas, having partaken richly of this oil of gladness, “sang praises unto God at midnight, in a dungeon.” Come ye wretched self deceivers, who seek pleasure where it is not to be found—who are alert and gay in a tavern, but drowsy and quite out of your element in a church—come and take freely of this oil, that your hearts may be renewed by it, and the tenour of your whole lives changed. You will then know what real gladness is, and taste more solid comfort in an hour, than you have yet experienced in your whole lives. Impart O God unto every soul in thy presence a little relish of this oil! —Our next general enquiry is

Secondly, what was the end or intent of our Lord’s being anointed. I apprehend that by this unction was shadowed forth his designation to his mediatorial office. Under the law, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed

with oil : and two of these offices sometimes centered in one person. Melchisedec was both priest and king. David was a prophet and king. Jeremiah was a priest and prophet. But Jesus was invested with all the three offices. God anointed him with the oil of gladness *above* his fellows—not only that he might in all things have the pre-eminence, but that every grace being centered in him, it might through him be dispensed for the use and benefit of his people. He was anointed with the oil of gladness, that he might be a prophet to teach us the will of his father—a priest to atone and intercede for us, and a king to rule over us, and to protect us.

1. He is a prophet to instruct us. This was early foretold of him as Peter observes, Acts iii. 22. “ For Moses truly said unto the father’s, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me ; him shall you hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.” The woman of Samaria likewise said in the course of her conversation with Jesus, “ Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.” Other prophets only taught a part of the will of God : but he hath declared unto us his whole counsel, and for this reason he is justly stiled the “ great prophet” of his church. Luke vii. 16. All the prophets who went before, and followed after him, were but inferior lights, and received all their lustre from him. He was “ the great light.” Matt. iv. 16. A small candle will lighten a chamber, and a torch will diffuse
some

some gleams of light through a whole street: but what are both, when compared with the light of the sun? So the light of former dispensations was but like the twinkling of a star, in comparison with the full blaze of this sun of righteousness. Jesus is the true light which maketh all things manifest. He is a prophet, mighty in word and in deed. Hear him therefore, and attend to his heavenly instructions. Be it your study to treasure them up in your hearts, since you are forewarned that "the soul, which will not hear him, shall be destroyed from among the people." Acts iii. 23. And indeed what else can you expect? For, "if the word spoken by angels or subordinate ministers, was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall you escape, if you neglect that great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?" Heb. ii. 2, 3. In what a striking view doth that passage Matt. xxi. 37. place the tender mercies of our God? After the Jews had killed his servants, and stoned them whom he had sent unto them, he saith, "I will send unto them my Son, they will reverence him." My soul! be melted at the sweet endearing thought, and instead of murdering the heir also, as they did, hearken to his melodious voice, which gently whispers within thee—"this is the way, walk in it."

2. Jesus was anointed that he might be the priest of his people. "The Lord hath sworn

and will not repent—thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.” Psalm cx. 4. In the discharge of this office his first work was to make atonement for sin, and to reconcile God to man. As under the law, when any one sinned, he was to bring an offering to the priest, and the priest was bound to offer it for him: so when we have sinned against heaven, our sin cannot be expiated but by the sacrifice, which Jesus once offered for sinners. There remaineth now no other sacrifice for sin, nor is any other necessary. “ By one offering he hath perfected for ever, them who are sanctified.” Heb. x. 14. Wide indeed is the difference between our high priest, and the priests of old. They atoned with the blood of beasts, which had no value in itself, but only as it was typical of him: but He, the grand anti-type, offered his own blood as an expiatory sacrifice. They would not part with one drop of their blood for the best of the people: but he shed the blood of his heart for the vilest of his servants. Another branch of the priests office was to make intercession. And oh! how well qualified is our Jesus for this work! He ever liveth to intercede for us. “ We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 John ii. 1. But why is he thus characterized—*Jesus Christ the righteous*? To shew that he is true to his promise, and now actually performing the office of an advocate. Many take upon them a trust, which they do not execute, and enter into engagements, which

which they never fulfill—Why? because they are not righteous. Why do magistrates connive at wickedness, and bear the sword of God in vain? because they are not righteous. Why are ministers remiss in preaching the gospel, or not instant in season and out of season in warning, admonishing and instructing their flocks, according to the apostolic rule? because they are unrighteous. But our intercessor is Jesus-Christ the righteous: and therefore we may depend upon his performing the office, which he hath undertaken. He took upon him our nature, that he might have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities: and you know, that even the beasts of the earth are, in the main, tender to their own nature, how ferocious soever they may be to others. The bear will not easily be robbed of her young, but will tear to pieces him, who attempts it, if she can. Well, no instinct, be it ever so strong, will admit of a comparison with that ardour of affection, which the Lord Jesus hath for his ransomed children. He will not lose one of them. They are members of his own body, and as such he watches over them with the fondest care. Oh! what tortures would you not undergo, rather than submit to have a leg or an arm cut off? And can it be supposed that you would do more for your members, than the Son of God will do for his? Hold, man! it would be blasphemy to harbour such a thought. His sensibility is without a parallel. There is not a pang that

thy mind, but what cost his heart a groan. He is perfectly acquainted with the nature of thy every temptation; for, though he was without sin, yet he was tempted in all things, as thou art. Art thou tempted to deny the providence of God? so was he. Art thou tempted to self murder? so was he. Art thou tempted to look upon the vanities of the world, as thy portion? so was he. Art thou tempted to idolatry, or to give that room in thy affections to any created person, or thing which is due only to God? so was he to worship the very devil himself. Matt. xliii. 10. From the manger to the cross he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And though he is now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, yet he hath still his eyes upon his people, and his ears are ever open to their complaints. He, the glorious head in heaven, sympathizes with his weary and pinched feet on earth; and cries out, whenever their trials become more sanguine than ordinary—"Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me?" Acts ix. 4. But this leads me to consider—

3. His kingly office. That he is the king of his church there can be no doubt, if we duly weigh the following scriptures. "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Psalm ii. 6. "Behold! thy king cometh." Zech. ix. 9. And the angel was very explicit on this point, when he made this declaration concerning him, before he was yet formed in the

the womb—"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke i. 32, 33. Indeed he is not a temporal prince. His dominion is over souls. When *the people would make him King*, he eluded their intention, and "departed into a mountain himself alone." John vi. 15. His kingdom was not to be like the kingdoms of this world. In these there must be subjects before there can be a sovereign: but in the kingdom of Jesus it is not so. There the king chooses his people, and not the people their king. He hath not one subject, but what is drawn by the power of his grace from another's kingdom—even the kingdom of Satan. "Other sheep," saith he, "I have who are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." John x. 16. What a strange infatuation is this in the sheep, that they will not come to feed on green pastures, until they are driven! If there were a kingdom any where upon earth, abounding in wealth, and all temporary conveniencies, in which men might live without tax or tribute, and free from all oppression and injustice: who would not press into it with main force and might? Well, the kingdom of Christ is full of every desirable thing that pertains to life and godliness, and

is rich in every privilege, that can make life comfortable, and death triumphant : yet the Lord sometimes waits twenty or thirty years before he can prevail with many to enter into it. So great is his tenderness, compassion, and long-suffering towards our fallen race !— I though he finds us fast asleep, and like Peter, bound with chains, yet he comes, and smites us, not on our side, but on our consciences ; leads us through the iron gates or thousands of dangers, and never rests till he hath brought us into the city—which is his own eternal kingdom. Again, Jesus is a king, who consults the good of his church. The difference between a king and a tyrant, according to Aristotle, consists in this : the former seeks the happiness of his subjects, and the latter seeks his own. The eleventh chapter of Isaiah is but one continued eulogium on the blessedness of Christ's kingdom. And in Psalm lxxii. 12. we are graciously informed that “ he shall deliver the needy, when he crieth—the poor also, and him who hath no helper.”

We are often apt to think, that matters are going quite contrary to the interest of his church ; but so long as he reigneth, we may set our hearts at ease, and assure ourselves that all things shall work together for its good. In a clock there are several wheels, which run counter to one another ; some move slowly, and others whirl about with great velocity : yet all unite in keeping the clock in motion, and contribute their share
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to make it a true index of the flight of time. So is every event, however opposite it may seem, disposed by the secret, impelling hand of God, to promote his glory, and to further the salvation of his chosen. In Matt. viii. 23. we read of a wonderful dispensation, which corroborates this truth. "When our Lord was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And behold! there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep, and discovered no anxiety about their preservation." What then? were they all drowned? no. But when he awoke, he dispelled all their fears, and brightened their understandings more than ever, so that they marvelled, and said—"what manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" Jacob said in his fright—"Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Gen. xlii. 36. No, no, old Jacob! all these things are for thee; for though thou art so far advanced in years: yet thou shalt, on this side of the grave, be favoured with a more heart-reviving sight of thy children than ever. Once more, Jesus is a king that protects, and fights for his subjects. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty." Psalm xlv. 3. In the revelation he is described as "cloathed with a vesture dipped in blood." Angels, among others, are amazed at this dress, and ask "who

is this with dyed garments?" Believers! he wears these garments on your account. When you take your rest, he fights for you. When you are mourning over your sins, he is conquering principalities on your behalf. Hear, for your comfort, what he saith to the Israel of God, and to you among others. "Fear you not: stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew you to day: for, the Egyptians, whom you have seen to day, you shall see again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you." *Exod. xiv. 13, 14.* Observe, he not only fights with you, but for you. When you are inactive, he is busy, when you are ready to despond, he appears on your side with an out stretched arm. "Hold you therefore your peace." But as this consideration affords comfort to the godly, so it should strike terror into the hearts of the ungodly. The blows, which they aim at his people, he takes upon himself, and resents them accordingly. If thou art, O man, an enemy unto him, and afflictest him in his members, he fights against thee. If thou dost from time to time resist his will, and wilt not have him to reign over thee; thou shalt suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. When the workers of iniquity hear that this king sweetly constrains all, who own and feel his sway, not to profane his name, or sabbaths—not to commit murder, or adultery—not to steal, or so much as to covet other men's goods; but

but to labour for their own living, and to do their duty in that state to which he hath been pleased to call them; they exultingly cry out—"let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us." But alas! they shall rue for it in the end. When they come to reap the fruit of their own doings, they shall find it to be bitter indeed. Oh! that they could be brought to own, in the language of the Egyptians of old—"Jesus, the king of Sion, is against us: let us flee, for we shall not prevail: let us bow the knee to the sceptre of his grace, lest we be consumed in the midst of our sins."

It remains now that I conclude the whole with a few suitable inferences. And first, hath God anointed the man Christ Jesus with the oil of gladness, and filled him with all the fulness of the Godhead? Then is he very God, and very man in one person. In him God tabernacled among men. The Father anoints the Son with the oil of gladness, which is the Holy Spirit. When we through sin were out of favour with God, he took upon him our nature, that he might reconcile us unto himself, and now, by his spirit, he applies that reconciliation to our souls. Behold! here are three persons in one God. For, though, in this wonderful dispensation of grace, he appears under three different characters, yet still it is the same God, rich in mercy to his offending creatures. That this is the doctrine of scripture

ture no man can deny, if he reads it with an unprejudiced mind. There all nations are commanded to be "baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. xxviii. 19. There we are told, that "the Holy Ghost made some to be overseers, that they might feed the church of God, which *he* had purchased with *his own* blood." Acts xx. 28. And not to multiply texts, that "the Comforter, or the Holy Ghost, to whom the Father would send in the name of this redeeming God, would teach the disciples all things, and bring all the things to remembrance, which he had said unto them." John xiv. 26. In this whole œconomy, the one supreme God is represented by three different operations, which can no more be separated from the divine essence, than heat, light, and air can be separated from fire, or than the light of three candles can be divided, whose rays are so splendid together, that they emit but one flame. This is one of the deep mysteries of the gospel, which infinitely transcends human comprehension: and can only be received by faith, on the credit of the eternal I AM, who hath revealed it. But here Turks and Infidels may be apt to ask us—"what great advantage can you derive from maintaining that there are three persons in one Jehovah?" We answer: our salvation is so closely connected with the belief of it, that, on scripture principles, it is utterly unattainable without.

out it. We had sinned; and like the fallen angels, were alienated from the life of God. Being in this state, it was absolutely necessary that one of infinite merit should make atonement for us, before God *could*, consistently with the rights of his moral government, and the honour of his attributes, be reconciled unto us; and that this atonement should be applied to our souls, before we *would* be reconciled unto him. Is it not therefore a matter of great consequence to maintain this essential doctrine, since our eternal salvation stands or falls with it? must we not insist upon this grand peculiarity of the christian religion, since it is the foundation of all our hopes? Let the sceptic then, who almost doubts his own existence, sneer at our credulity; and let Mahometan sophs triumph in the notion of their superior knowledge. We will, undismayed by scorn or the imputation of ignorance, simply adhere to the doctrines of the Bible, and not attempt to be wise above what is written. A day will soon arrive, in which every mystery shall be cleared up, and then it will be universally known, who are mistaken. In the mean time, let us, my believing friends, improve this doctrine to the allaying of every asperity in our temper, even towards those who differ widest from us in sentiments. Hath God the Father anointed God the Son with the Holy Ghost, that he might make us who were enemies, *his fellows* — that he might bring us near, who were

once as far off as others, and communicate to us happiness both now and for ever? Then let us labour to be as much like this triune God as we can, while we militate in this world of ungodliness. Let us endeavour to do good unto all men, that we may approve ourselves the children of "our Father, who is in heaven, for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matt. v. 45. Nothing can make us resemble God more than having grace to "love our enemies—to bless them who curse us, and to do good unto them who hate us." Elijah made a trench about the altar: then the fire of the Lord fell and licked up the water that was in the trench. Now, every elementary fire would only have consumed the sacrifice and the wood: but this, because it was a fire from heaven, licked up that water, which would have extinguished every other fire. So human virtues may be kind and beneficial to friends and relations; but nothing but the graces of the Spirit can render us loving and tender hearted to our enemies. David, though he knew that Saul thirsted after his blood, yet spared his life, when the Lord had delivered him into his hands. "This," saith Chrysostom, "redounded more to his honour, than all his victories over the Philistines." Why? because in them he only shewed himself to be the excellent commander, and the intrepid hero. But in sparing and forgiving Saul, he proved himself

himself to be a holy, righteous and merciful man. "But ought we not to manifest our chief regard to the household of faith?" This must be determined according to the necessity of the case. If an enemy be in greater distress than a friend, or requires more immediate assistance, we are not to hesitate a moment, but to relieve the enemy first. If a tender mother, who was sitting near the bed of her sick child, and watching his every groan, was to hear that one of her cattle was in danger of drowning, and could not be saved without her help; would she not leave the child for a few minutes, and hasten to save the beast? Let us go and do likewise. That God, who prefers mercy before sacrifice, will dispense with his own worship, while "a sheep, that is fallen into a pit, is lifted out." Matt. xii. 11.

Secondly, hath the Father anointed the Son with the oil of gladness for the use and benefit of his fellows? Then how great is their privilege who are entitled to this high and distinguishing appellation. They partake of his graces, and are called after his name. "And the disciples were called christians." Acts xi. 26. What doth that imply? That they too were anointed. They took their name from Christ, and through him were anointed. He was not anointed on his own account, but as the head of his people, "As the precious ointment, which was poured upon the head of Aaron, did not abide there,

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but went down to the skirts of his garments: so the oil, with which the Lord Jesus was anointed, descended, and is still descending from him on the meanest of his members." May it therefore be our happiness to be so united by a vital faith to Christ our living head, that we, being his fellows, may not only be called after his name, but be real partakers of his graces! May the oil of gladness distil from him drop by drop, into our souls, till having received out of his fulness, grace upon grace, they are distended to the full extent of their capacity, and filled to the brim!

Lastly, seeing the Father hath anointed the Son, we ought likewise to anoint him. 'But how can sinners anoint the King of glory.' In various ways. They may anoint his feet with tears, his head with love, and his body with brotherly kindness. The woman, "who was a sinner, washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head." Luke vii. 38. The holy Spirit always melts those into tears of penitence, whom he condescends to exalt into the happy number of Christ's *fellows*. Before honour is humility. Tears are of more value in the sight of God, than any ointment that the apothecary can prepare. Some have stiled them nectar or angel's wine, but as Luther observes, they are a *rare* commodity. Mankind have tears to shed for the loss of their cattle, though they should be as lean as Pharaoh's kine—but to weep for their souls, like the stony ground, they want moisture. We hear
great

great complaints against hard times, but none, or very little against hard hearts. Oh ! what multitudes are there among us, whose hearts, like Gideon's fleece, are dry ; or like the mountains of Gilboa, have neither rain nor dew upon them ? Alas ! hath Jesus Christ bled for the sins of others, and wilt thou not weep for thy own ? Nay, what is still worse, wilt thou, O hardened wretch, take pleasure in those sins, which nailed him to the accursed and ignominious tree ? Oh ! it is a melancholy sight, as Theophylact once observed, to see a sinner going down to hell laughing. In this respect I may venture to pronounce him, worse than the very devils themselves : for however they may delight in sin, they cannot be merry with it. " Be afflicted therefore, ye prisoners of hope, and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, that he may lift you up." James iv. 9, 10. To the tears which you shed for the distresses of your bodies, and the untowardness of the times, may some be added for the sins of your souls. Some must be wrung from you on this score, before you can be anointed with the oil of gladness. The simpering Antinomian, who, with the Philistines of old, " stops his wells, and fills them with earth ;" or, who having the wounds of the Lamb continually in his mouth, hath never been himself wounded in heart, may call this a legal doctrine. But it is not so. It is the

doctrine of the crucified Jesus, whose own words are these—"blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Matt. v. 4. It is the doctrine, which his apostles preached, Mark vi. 12. And whoever gainsays it, gainsays the spirit of grace, who saith, "that they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one who is in bitterness for his first born." Zech. xii. 10. Eusebius informs us, that there was an altar at Athens, upon which tears were the only sacrifice that was offered. This intimates, that the heathens had a notion that tears could assuage the fury of their angry gods. And a criminal is actuated by the same notion, when bathed in tears, he tries to make some favourable impressions upon his judge. But we do not consider tears in this light: for, though we maintain that tears, when they spring from a broken spirit and a contrite heart, are evidences of the spirit's actual operation on our souls; yet we do not think that we can by them avert the wrath of God or move him to compassion. No, our mourning is no further necessary than as it is a proof of our being convinced of sin. The valley of Achor is the door of hope. "Jacob wept and prevailed." Hos. xii. 4. If tears were not precious, "the Lord would not put them into his bottle." Psalm lvi. 8. Having therefore anointed our Lord's feet with tears, our next step is to anoint

anoint his head with the oil of true piety and love unfeigned. When he hath spoken peace to our consciences, we must, "having much forgiven us, love him much." Love is the fulfilling of the whole law. Love is the richest pearl that can be bestowed upon us, and the sweetest grace that we can possess. Oh ! blessed is the man, who feels it glowing in his bosom. We should be always ready to love that, which is most deserving of our esteem ; and who, or what but the Lord Jesus can lay claim to this title ? The holy angels, who have enjoyed his blissful presence for thousands of years in heaven, cannot fully tell how precious he is, "who is, or ought to be the desire of all nations." We may love other persons and things to excess ; but there is no danger of loving him to excess, who is the anointed of the Father. "Mary loved him much ;" but not too much. Angels cannot love him according to his worth. The church, in the Canticles, after she had recounted many of his excellencies, found herself utterly unable to do justice to them all, and was forced to content herself with this brief summary of them—"yea, he is altogether lovely." The more we speak of him, the more we shall have to speak. He is the Saviour of men, and the preserver of angels. O then let us love him with all our hearts, and with all our strength. Solomon saith—"many daughters have done virtuously ;" but I will say of love. "thou excellest them all." Love is compared in the scripture dialect to the best thing

thing of every kind. Love is the cement of union between the sacred three. Nay, "God is love." 1 John iv. 8. Amidst the glorious host of heaven, the Seraphim, according to the judgment of some divines, are of the highest order: and a Seraph signifies, in the original, a flame of love. Many have tortured their brains to find out the philosopher's stone, which is supposed to change every thing that it touches, into gold. They have searched for it in the fusion of various metals, but their search is all in vain. It is neither to be found in any mineral, or in a combination of all the minerals, which are lodged in the bowels of the earth. It is love, and flows from God alone. This is the true *lapis philosophicus*, which turns whatever it touches into that, which is far better than gold. May this love be shed abroad abundantly in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, that it may transform us into the divine likeness! May it set all the faculties of the soul in a flame, that we may love him who is the chief among ten thousands, with an ardour of affection, which many waters cannot quench, and no floods of opposition, or persecution can drown! And when we are enabled to love *him* who is the anointed of the Father, we shall then love *them* who are anointed of him, and be kindly affectioned one to another. Believers are, in a sense, his fellows; and to treat them with brotherly kindness, is the most fragrant ointment that can be poured upon his head. They are flesh of his flesh, and bone of

of his bone. Neither distance, nor poverty, can dissolve the union, that subsists between him and his people. Though he sits victorious on his throne, yet he hath a fellow feeling with them in their joys and fears. He weeps with them when they weep, and rejoices with them when they rejoice. He reckons every wrong, which they suffer, as affecting his own person, and counts every favour, which is shewn them, a token of regard to himself. What encouragement is this for us, to abound in every work and labour of love; and with Nicodemus, to anoint the body of our Lord with the oil of commiseration towards his afflicted members! If any of them be in necessity, this should excite us to be bountiful unto them according to our power. Our hands should follow the hand of God, and in proportion as he is liberal unto us, should our liberality be extended unto others. He is good unto all, and so are we to be good unto all—but “especially unto those who are of the household of faith.” It is true, that without faith, no work can be good or acceptable in the sight of God. Heb. xi. 6. But then it is equally true, that our faith must be seen by our works. James ii. 18. Thou sayest that thou hast faith, let it appear in thy life and conversation. We read Luke v. 20. that our Saviour *saw* the faith of those who brought the paralytic unto him to be cured: he saw it not only with the eyes of his godhead, but as it was manifested to his bodily eyes in its effects and fruits. Isaac would

would not bless Jacob till he had felt him, lest there should be a deception in his voice and words ; but when he found Esau's hands, he blessed him without further enquiry or suspicion. So the Lord will not give credit to thy bare talk, or pay any regard to thy mere pleadings—" I am a christian. I am a professor, and hold one of the chief places in the church : " but he will inspect thee more narrowly, and examine whether thou hast the hands of his beloved—hands exercised in godly deeds—hands ready to give, and glad to distribute food and raiment among his indigent saints. In the great day of judgment, the works of all men shall be published before assembled worlds, whether they be good or bad. Then shall the happy souls which shall be placed on the right hand of the judge, hear these sweet accents sounding from his lips, " I was an hungered, and you gave me meat, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger, and you took me in." Matt. xxv. 35. He remembers your every mite, and will proclaim on that august and awful theatre, how many journies you shall have taken to hear the word—how many times you shall have prayed—how many tears you shall have shed for your sins—how many hungry persons you shall have fed, and how many naked backs you shall have cloathed. Nay, he doth not now forget the humble offerings of a grateful heart. Witness his kind declaration concerning the woman who poured ointment on his head—" verily I say unto you,

you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." Matt. xxvi. 13. But alas! how will *they* on the left hand, be able to hold up their guilty heads, when this woeful charge shall be brought against them, and be undeniably proved to their eternal confusion? "I was an hungered, and you gave me *no* meat, I was thirsty and you gave *no* drink, I was a stranger, and you took me *not* in." Woe be to the misers, who will not anoint the body of Jesus, or relieve the wants of his necessitous and distressed members. Their hands, alas! are either so dried up like the hand of Jeroboam, that they cannot use them, or are swelled so big, that they cannot put them into their purses, when the cries—the doleful cries of penury and wretchedness solicit their aid. There is room to fear that some make a god of their gold. When once they have deposited it in their chests, as in a sacred temple, they hold it in such veneration, that they dare not touch it—much less to circulate it in acts of beneficence among the industrious poor, who may be sick and needy. No, this they dread, even as they dread the approach of death. It would be much easier to persuade them to commit sacrilege against God, than to part with one of their idols. Hence they want what they have, as much as that which they have not. They are like the sacks which Joseph's brethren had, these had money and
corn

corn in them. But of what utility was either to them? Both only served to wear them out the sooner. Thus many heaped up wealth, and watch over it with as much anxiety, as if it were their *own*, but will no more venture to use and enjoy it, than if they knew it to be the property of *others*. They might be happy if they were to trust God with a little of it. But they are miserable by sequestering the whole from their own, as well as from the public use. They are, it seems, more solicitous to leave their treasures to their enemies when they die, than to communicate any of them to their friends while they live. That rich worldling in the gospel, whose stores flowed in so fast upon him, that he knew not where to stow them, chose rather to pull down his own barns, than to entrust them in the barns of others, or to disperse his superfluities among his destitute neighbours. But I am weary of this strain. If any of you have tasted the oil of gladness in your souls, I make no doubt but that you will honour the Lord with your substance, and anoint his body in his diseased, and famishing members with the first fruits of your increase. And may the blessing of him, who was ready to perish, rest upon you both now and ever! Amen.

S E R M O N VIII.

Brotherly reproof.

Matt. xviii. 25. Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go, and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

OUR blessed Saviour, having in the preceding verses, warned his disciples against giving offence to any, is here directing them how to conduct themselves towards those who should have offended them. “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, and grieve thy soul, by sinning against thee, and by wounding thy weak conscience—by treating thee with malignant contempt, and by insulting thy person—by injuring thee in thy reputation, and by damaging thy worldly goods: or by any of those ways, which are recorded in Levit. vi. 2, 3. then remember the rule in the text: Go, and tell him his fault. Hate not thy brother in thy heart:

that is, let not thine indignation ripen into rooted malevolence, or fester with secret and settled malice, like a dangerous wound that bleeds inwardly ; but deal out thy thoughts in grave, candid and convincing admonitions. Tell him his fault, between thee and him alone. Never reproach him in his absence, or speak slightly of him to others, because evil surmisings and back-bitings will only widen, instead of healing the wound. Go not forth hastily to strive. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself, and discover not a secret to another. Prov. xxy. 8, 9. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. A brother that sinneth, is in a sense lost. Satan, who is a man-stealer, hath made a prey of his soul. And is it a small matter unto thee to bring back him who is lost, into the sacred fold, out of which he hath strayed ? When thy brother therefore shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, and if he shall have grace to hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." But to be more particular. I propose with the divine assistance, to shew *whom* we are to reprove—" if thy brother : " *why* we are to reprove—" shall trespass against thee : " *how* we are to reprove—" go and tell him his faults between thee and him alone : " for *what end* we are to reprove—" if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

First, I am to shew whom we are to reprove. It is our brother. But who is he ? This term

term, in the general, comprehends all mankind. "God hath made, of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Acts xvii. 26. Descended from the same stock, we have all but one father; and born of the same mother, we are all brothers and sisters. A *Turk* or an *Indian* is as much our brother, as he who sprang from the same loins with ourselves. It is true, that a narrow and bigotted notion had prevailed among the Jews, which greatly contracted the sphere of their beneficence. They called no man brother, unless he belonged to one of the tribes of Israel; and looked upon all the other nations of the world as strangers and aliens—unworthy of their regard, and not at all entitled to any offices of humanity from them. Hence the priest and the Levite, when they saw the poor man, who had fallen among thieves, stripped of his raiment, wounded and half dead, lent a deaf ear to his cries, "and passed by on the other side." Having, by their traditions, wrested from their original meaning many texts of the law, which recommended universal compassion even to their very cattle; they were steeled against the impulse of nature, and impregnable, as a rock of adamant, to the calls of duty. Though they were to teach others the amiable lessons of piety and charity, yet they did not choose to exemplify them in their own practice. And alas! there are too many at this day, who

tread in their steps. But this is not agreeable
 either to the doctrine or example of Jesus
 Christ. He came to pull down the partition
 wall, within which the Jews had immured
 themselves; and to level with the ground all
 party names, and party spirit. He com-
 manded the gospel to be preached unto every
 creature, that was capable of being benefited
 by it, and enjoined his followers "to be mer-
 ciful, even as their father who is in heaven,
 is merciful." And I question not, but that
 every person, in whose heart the religion of
 Jesus hath actually taken root, is not only
 tender and compassionate to his fellow men,
 but merciful to his beasts and domestic ani-
 mals. He considers them as the workman-
 ship of God, and cannot bear to see them
 tortured with pain, or pining away for want
 of proper sustenance. And it is probable,
 that St. Paul had something of this kind in
 his eye, as well as those other more import-
 ant objects, when he saith to Timothy—
 "But if any provide not for his own, and
 especially for those of his own house, he hath
 denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."
 1 Tim. v. 8. Now, if we are to be careful
 of the life, and attentive to the wants of the
 brute-creation, how much more should we
 consult the health, and attend to the welfare
 of him who derives his origin from the same
 common parent, is nourished by the produc-
 tions of the same earth, and whose weary bones
 shall soon rest as quietly in her bosom, as our
 own?

own? Every man is our brother, and God highly resents every breach of brotherly love, wherever he observes it. Hear what he saith in Amos i. 11. "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever." The Edomites you know, were the offspring of Esau, and their chief crime consisted in persecuting the people of God without weariness, or the least remorse. Though they were too faint hearted to face Israel in their own strength, yet, having joined in confederacy with others, and having the prospect of overthrowing them by the dint of superior numbers, they were insatiable in their revenge and urged their confederates to mow down all before them, without respect to age or sex. "*Rase* them," said they, "*rase* them even to the foundation." Psalm cxxxvii. 7. Cowards are of all men the most cruel. When they get the least advantage over their foes, they think that they can never trample them deep enough into the earth. They have not a grain of compassion left. They are still thirsting for more blood, and are ever crying with the daughters of the horseleech,—"*give! give!*" Time itself could not rub out Esau's grudge against Jacob. But though the Edomites were thus bitter against Israel, they had no just cause to be so. They meddled not with them

in their passage to Canaan, and were strictly prohibited to expect that a foot breadth of their land should be given unto them. Deut. ii. 5.

This is not mentioned with a view to upbraid them; but to shew how careful the Lord was that his Israel should not offend a brother. But though the word "brother," in its most extensive signification, implies every individual of the human race, wherever he is dispersed, or to whatever sect or denomination of people he may belong; yet there is still a more peculiar sense, in which the word *brother* is to be understood, and to which our Lord probably referred in my text. By brother he might here mean one of his own disciples, who, being not only descended from the same father, but begotten again by the same spirit, and having Jesus Christ for his elder brother, is united to us by stronger ties than those of consanguinity. One is our Father, "who is in Heaven:" and whom he as well as we daily address as "our Father." One is our Saviour, "who is not ashamed to call us his brethren," and doth not disdain to reckon every kindness, that is "done unto the least of his brethren, as done unto himself." Matt. xxv. 40. "We are one body, and one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling." We have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, the same views, the same privileges, and the same expectations beyond the grave." Now, when one of these

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our brethren falls into sin, we are to reprove him, lest we, by our silence, should partake of his guilt. We are to go and tell him his fault between him and us alone; and to rebuke him with all long suffering. That we are thus to reprove him, and not to suffer sin to rest upon him, is clearly evident from several passages in the new testament. St. Paul saith—"brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, do you, who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves, lest you also be tempted." Gal. vi. 1. And James, in much the same strain, gives this advice to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad—"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he, who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death; and shall hide a multitude of sins." James v. 19, 20. The very idea of his being our brother should stir us up to admonish him of his fault, and to remind him of its fatal consequences. As this is not only an express command of the gospel, but is likewise consonant to the law of nature, St. Paul doth further enforce it, by a comparison drawn from the members of the body, which are, by the very construction of the human frame, bound to assist one another upon every emergency. "We," saith he, "are the body of Christ, and members in particular. Now, as in the natural body, the members have the same care one for another;

ther; and when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and strive to remove the grievance. For instance, when the foot is hurt, the eyes examine the wound, the ears listen in order to hear what is most likely to cure it, and the hands are eager to apply any remedy, that may be prescribed. And shall we, who believe, be unconcerned about that, which will certainly expose our *brother* to suffering, who is a part of ourselves? or shall that, which is sure to incommode him, sit easy upon us?" The antient fathers made use of an argument, that was equally conclusive, when they thus reproved the want of brotherly love. "If any man," said they, "can rescue his brother from harm, or prevent any evil from befalling him, and will not; such an one is an enemy to his brother, and accessory to his hurt. For suppose, that thy poor neighbour is in bodily want, and thou sufferest him to perish with hunger, when thou hast it in thy power to feed and cherish him: lo! he dies, but were not thou the cause of his death? or, suppose, that thy brother falls into deep waters, and is in danger every moment of sinking: he stretches out his hand unto thee, and thou canst pull him out, but neglectest the opportunity, and deniest him any help: lo! he sinks to the bottom, didst not thou drown him? or seest thou thy neighbour's house on fire? and art thou furnished with the ready means of extinguishing it, and will not use them? lo! thy neighbour's house is reduced

reduced to ashes; and it is thou who hast burned it." Wherefore when a brother sinneth, take heed that you connive not at his sin, or let it pass unnoticed; lest it should lie at your door, and you should be deemed answerable for it. Warn him freely, and, if it be necessary, rebuke him sharply. Nay, let not your kind reproofs and admonitions be limited within a narrow circle; but let them stretch out as far as your influence extends. Reprove sin wherever you find it. Shew it no indulgence. Give it no quarter. But here perhaps you will say—"what! would you have us cast pearls before swine? If we shew this favour to the wicked, will they not turn and rend us for it? will not our gentle admonitions exasperate, instead of reclaiming them? Are not they like a sort of paper which the more it is daubed with oil, the more stiff and starched it grows; or like the sand of the sea, which the more it is watered, the harder it becomes; or like Judas, who the cleaner his feet were washed, the filthier *he* was, and the more eager to sell and betray his master? Are not some men of such a stubborn, and untoward temper, that one slight offence sours them, more than a thousand kindnesses can ingratiate us to them? did not Esau retain the memory of his lost birthright, much longer than the droves of herds, with which Jacob afterwards presented him? Nay, did not the mess of pottage ferment in the bowels of his descendants for many generations,

ations, after he had been dead? What good then can there be in reprov^g? or, who would run the risk of such a hazardous and unthankful office?"—It is acknowledged that all persons will not bear to be reprov^d. The blasphemer, the drunkard, the unclean, and every worker of iniquity will, each of them, speedily ask when they are told of their faults, and rebuked for them—"who hath made you a magistrate or a judge? You take too much upon you. What right have you to intermeddle with our affairs, or to abridge us of our pleasures?" Such returns you may often meet with for your brotherly admonitions, but these should not discourage you. Still it is your duty to reprove, whenever you see it necessary. And though you should be reviled for your kind intentions as hypocrites, and dissemblers, yet you should still persist, and only answer your revilers with such a mild reply as this—"A christian I am, and I am constrained by the bonds of brotherly love, to declare unto you simply my thoughts concerning your conduct, and to unbosom my secret grief on your account. Fain would I see you reclaimed and serious, as it becometh those who have God for their Father, and it grieves me to find that my reproofs make no stronger impressions upon you. You may now think that I am your enemy, but you will one day know that I am your friend." But it is now time that I should hasten, 2ndly to shew, why, or for what we are to reprove a brother. It is for

for trespassing against us. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee." This seems to confine his crime within a narrow compass; but it extends much farther than we may apprehend at first view.

To trespass against us, admits of great latitude, and includes not only those personal offences, and temporal damages, which have been mentioned at the opening of this discourse; but likewise every sin, that is committed against God, and every evil that is done unto our neighbour. The christian is not at all selfish. What regards his own person is seldom one of those faults, on which he bestows his severest reproofs. He confesses, that whatever he may suffer from others, is far less than his iniquities deserve; and he is not in the least desirous to be his own avenger.

"The trespasses," saith he, "which dishonour God, and bring contempt on his grace, affect me much more nearly than those wrongs, which I endure in my own name, or substance, because I am bound to esteem his glory above every secondary consideration, and to give him the preference to every thing, that concerns myself." Hadrian the lawyer said —

"Whosoever sins against God, offends every true believer: because he, who insults the father in the presence of the son, insults the son also; and he who reproaches the master in the hearing of the servant, reproaches the servant also." Love makes all things common, so that we cannot be passive, when

we

we hear *him*, whom we love abused. The charge comes home to ourselves. As the great Jehovah condescends to assure us, that he looks upon every affront and injury, which we receive from others as intended against himself, and that "he who toucheth us, toucheth the apple of his eye:" so should we look upon every provocation, by which God is offended, as levelled against us, and mourn for it in the bitterness of our spirits. The language of our hearts, upon every such occasion, should be this: "the zeal of thine house, the honour of thy name, and a respect to thine authority consume my flesh, and dry up my bones, when I see thine enemies, O Lord, profaning thy sanctuary, despising thy word, and disobeying thy commandments. The reproaches of them, who reproach thee, fall upon me. I am grieved when I behold the transgressors trampling upon thy laws, crucifying thy son afresh, and, doing despite to thy spirit. My soul is wounded within me at every slight, that is aimed at thee. I feel its smart, and cannot help reproving it." In like manner, should every trespass against our neighbour be deemed an offence against ourselves. Why? because I ought to love my neighbour as myself, and to be as quick in feeling every wrong, that is done unto him, as if it were done unto myself. We are both members of the mystical body of Christ: and I cannot be an unconcerned spectator while he is writhing with pain,
or

or bleeding under the scourge of malevolence. This hath been confessedly the temper of saints in all ages, and I believe it to be still the disposition of every one who is really born of God. The meek and patient Moses was as much agonized at Israel's sin, as if he had himself been a partner in it, and with earnest supplications and tears, cried out—"if thou wilt not forgive their sin, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book." And Paul, with equal emphasis, declares—"who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. xi. 29. But my brother's trespasses are not only committed *against me*, as they dishonour God, injure my neighbour and wound myself, but as they threaten to involve me in his punishment. The Almighty sometimes punishes the righteous with the wicked. For Achan's sin there fell about thirty six men, when the Israelites fled before the inhabitants of Ai. Joshua vii. 5. For the wickedness of the sons of Eli the children of Israel were slain before the Philistines, and the ark of God was taken. 1 Sam. iv. 17. No less than seventy thousand of the same nation died of the pestilence for David's sin in numbering the people. 2 Sam. xxiv. 15. Jonah's disobedience raised a dreadful storm, which threatened the loss of the ship in which he sailed, and put the lives of all who were with him, in imminent jeopardy.

In short, the sins of individuals always reach to the whole community, and have a

strong tendency to bring the heaviest judgments upon it. They shut up the windows of heaven, that the clouds may not drop fatness. They parch the earth, and prevent her from yielding her increase. They cut off the staff of life, and usher in pale famine with his meagre train. Are not then the sins of my brother trespasses against me? am I not nearly concerned in their consequences? have I not much to fear and much to lose if I do not speedily reprove him? Impressed by these considerations, and impelled by these motives, I will “go to him, and tell him his fault between him and me alone.” Which leads me

Thirdly, to shew how we are to reprove. As this is a weighty business and a difficult task, I will attempt, according to the strength and wisdom given me, to lay down a few rules to guide you in the exercise and performance of it.

1. Be sure that the person whom you are about to reprove, is really guilty of the sin, for which you are going to reprove him. Do nothing in the dark. Proceed not rashly, or till you have obtained the clearest evidence of his guilt. This is implied in the text—“if thy brother *shall* trespass against thee.” Take not up an accusation against him from mere report or bare suspicion. Be first well acquainted with his fault, that you may ground your charge upon a sure foundation. It is an intolerable
hardship

hardship to force open a man's jaws, and with a steel instrument extract his sound tooth. Before you come to use such violence, it is but right that you should know with certainty that his tooth is rotten. No less painful and torturing is it to see people hunting for wickedness in the house of the righteous, and rather grieved at their own disappointment in not finding it, than pleased with the discovery of his uprightness. Such are "witnesses against their neighbours without cause." Prov. xxiv. 28. They are for ferreting out faults, but not too near home. They beat not their own, but the grounds of others for them. 'They are,' as Austin observes, 'so busy in searching for sins abroad, that they have neither leisure nor inclination to inspect their own.' Take heed then that you be not more ready to judge others, than you are to judge yourselves. St. Bernard gives an useful hint on this head when he saith—"while a man is upon the hunt for other men's faults, he is all that time from home, and consequently a stranger to the faults which are harboured in his own bosom." It is a duty incumbent upon you, if you would reprove with propriety, to be cautious of entertaining hastily a bad opinion of any person. Where the soul is upright, there the sentiments are candid. "Love thinketh no evil." But the wicked devise wicked devices, because "every imagination of their own heart is evil, and only evil continually." St. James whispers this cutting

question in the ears of those, who presume to judge of the secret intents of the heart, which is a prerogative that belongs to God alone—“who art thou that judgest another?” You must not be too harsh in your determinations concerning others, because they, who stand, may fall; and they, who are fallen, may rise again. Neither your love nor godly fear is yet perfect. Before therefore you reprove a brother, be very deliberate in examining into the nature of his fault, and its degree of malignity. Weigh it well, lest you should run upon a fruitless errand to the neglect of your own private concerns. Be not startled at the shaking of a feather. Put not a bad construction upon indifferent things.

2. See that the sin, which you are about to reprove, be that heinous sin, which you have taken it to be. Indeed there is no kind of sin, but what ought to be reproved. There is no little sin, properly speaking, because every sin is committed against a great God, and deserves the damnation of hell. Hence the prophet when he proclaims, “that the soul which sinneth, shall die,” doth not specify any particular sin, because every sin merits death. Yet by comparing one sin with another, as they are injurious to individuals, and pernicious to society, one seems to be little, and the other is acknowledged to be great. This necessary distinction corresponds with our Lord’s testimony before Pilate, where he said—“he, who delivered me unto thee,
no more
hath

hath the greater sin." John xix. 11. And there is an expression in my text. which proves the same point—"thou hast gained thy brother." Now, he could not have been gained, unless he had been before lost. We do not reckon him lost, who is only subject to those natural infirmities, which are inseparable from this imperfect state—"seeing that in many things we all offend." James iii. 2. The sin therefore, which is here intended, is not a small failing, from which the best of men are not exempted: but a sin, which required church censure, and excommunication. We are not for every trifle to fly in the face of our brother; and to hale him before our tribunal. But when we reprove him, we should be clear that it is for sin, and particularly for *that* which is most enormous.

3. When you are about to reprove a brother, you should consider whether there is any probability of your doing him any good by your reproofs. The physician seldom administers his medicines to those, of whom he hath no hopes of recovery; much more should he forbear, when he knows that they would do his patient more hurt than good. So should you be sparing of your reproofs, when your brother is more likely to be injured, than benefitted by them. It is better not to labour at all, than to labour to a bad purpose. If that pains-taking parent, who starves himself, that his son may, after his death, roll in plenty and be a fine gentleman, knew before-

before-hand, what an incarnate devil his don would turn out to be, he would sooner commit his treasures to the flames, than reserve them for his diabolical uses. If the goldsmith were persuaded, that his toil and sweat at the refining pot, would answer no end, but to injure his health, and perhaps to shorten his days; he would sooner break his utensils in pieces, and burst his bellows apart, than engage in such an unprofitable and unhealthy employment. Equally fruitless it is to reprove some men. It is worse than lost labour: it not only doth them no good, but is often very prejudicial to the reprovor. As vinegar, poured upon nitre, causes it to burn, to melt, and smoak, like quick lime when water is thrown upon it: so to reprove them is to swell, enrage, and enkindle their resentment. It is as well to sit still as to attempt to admonish many a scoffer, yea, all those, who make a mock at sin. Among Pythagoras's sayings is this sentence recorded, *ignem gladio te laceris*: which is, by plain interpretation, thou shalt not rebuke an enraged madman: his fire will do thy sword more harm, than thy sword can do his fire. When David sent ten of his young men to Nabal, modestly to request some needful refreshments for him, and his companions in distress; Nabal sent them back with a scornful and churlish answer. His behaviour must have made the gentle Abigail uneasy at the time, and apprehensive about the consequences: but she,

she, being a considerate woman, never mentioned a word of his sin and danger to him, till he was sober. Why? because she knew that to admonish or reprove him, while he was in a state of intoxication, would only add fuel to fire, and render him still more churlish than he was before. The prophet Jeremiah compares the rugged tempers of some to that of a wild ass, who tears and tramples upon every thing that would check or curb her. And indeed the comparison is but too just. These rough and unhewn souls are so crabbed in their disposition, and so wedded to their own wills, that if you do but cross their humour, it is a hundred to one if you can escape *without feeling the effects of their displeasure*. So true it is, that "though a fool should be brayed in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." Prov. xxvii. 22. The threshing instruments will separate the chaff from the wheat; but no efforts will separate the fool from his folly. Hence the Lord complained of old—"Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross; all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead in the midst of the furnace." Ezek. xxiii. 18. There they lie melting in one common furnace, and if such a fiery operation cannot purify them, what can? What cause then have you, who are about to engage in the nice and critical office of reproving others to seek wisdom from above, before you undertake it, and to pray for the teaching of the spirit of God, that you may

may know *w'om*, and *how* to reprove, lest by your bungling and unskilful procedure, you should hurt the cause which you mean to serve. "Give not that, which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Matt. vii. 9. To reprove successfully requires no small degree of dexterity and penetration. It must be the combined work of a cool head, and a gracious compassionate heart. It belong not to carnal, but to spiritual persons. For, though a man, who is weak and sickly, may have a greater sympathy for those who are diseased in body, than he, who is in high health; yet sure I am, that none, but a good man, will feel and grieve for the wickedness of the wicked, and that every bad man is at least, in this respect, cruel; because it is his character, that "he rejoiceth in iniquity." When you reprove therefore, let not your indiscretion render your reproofs of none effect. Go to your brother in the spirit of meekness, and deal as tenderly with him, as if you were going to lay a *pledget* in a deep wound; or, as if you were handling Venice-glass, or the thin, and brittle ware of China. The feelings of nature are so delicate, especially in affliction, that they call for a downy and not a leaden hand; and its sores should be probed with the most exquisite art. When Elijah fled from the vengeance of Jezebel, he concealed himself for some time in a cave at Horeb the mount of God:
and

and while he was there, his spirit became in a measure embittered, and he was a little displeased that God should suffer his ministers to be so harrassed and persecuted. Though his zeal for the Lord of hosts had been great, yet he was now beyond his depth, and in a fit of despondency, spake unadvisedly with his lips. As such a language from a servant was not to escape unproved, his Lord said unto him—"go forth and stand upon the mount. And behold! the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, and after the wind, an earthquake, and after the earthquake, a fire, and after the fire a still small voice." By the former manifestations of his power, he shewed that he had many means, both awful and terrible, by which he could humble the human mind, and bow it into subjection to his will; but by the latter condescensions of his grace, he shadowed forth that benignity in his nature, which always inclines him to bear with the weaknesses of his people, and, in the present instance, disposed him to calm the ruffled spirit of his prophet by a still small voice, rather than the loud and alarming displays of his majesty. Some reproofs are so wild and rapid, that, like a whirlwind, they drive all before them, and leave neither conviction nor conversion behind them; others are sudden and violent, which rend the conscience, like an earthquake, and answer no end, but to make huge and horrid gashes in it

it: and others are so warm and fiery, that, instead of enlightening, they scorch the very soul of the reprovèd, and so prejudice it against the truth, as it is in Jesus. But the Lord is in neither of these. They, who reprove under his guidance, and by his direction are meek and tender hearted. They are not furious, but gentle, "considering themselves." "To day my brother hath trespassed against me, I may tomorrow trespass against him. I will therefore deal with him to-day, as I would wish him to deal with me to morrow." Reproofs should be used as you would use a bridle in the management of a restive or intractable horse. If the bridle be held too loose, it doth no good: if it be kept too tight, it may do much harm. The heart is the mark, at which reproofs should be pointed. O for wisdom, like the children of Benjamin, to hit the heart at an hairs breadth, without flying wide or falling short of it! "If you blow upon a spark," saith the son of Sirach, "it will kindle, but if you spit upon it, it will be quenched:" and yet both proceed from the same mouth. So the same tongue can as easily utter a soft, as a harsh reproof: but their effect is very different. O see to it, that you be neither too hot nor too cold in your brotherly admonitions; but that you just catch the right temperature. What said Job when his friends poured upon him a torrent of foolish invectives? Why, he asked them this simple question, which ought to have silenced their

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their unmeaning reproaches, or to have prevailed with them to season them a little higher—"can that, which is unfavoury, be eaten without salt? or, is there any taste in the white of an egg." Job vi. 6, 7. Every reproof should be seasoned with salt, or else it will be quite insipid and useless. But then there may be too much as well as too little salt in it. Oh! it is a difficult matter to hit the happy medium between both extremes. May that blessed spirit, who alone can keep us from straying either to the right or to the left, lead us into all truth, and direct us in the performance of every necessary duty!

4. When you are about to reprove a brother, go to him yourselves. Do not wait till he comes of his own accord to you; for who would willingly go to be rebuked and chastened? Summon him not by a messenger to appear before you, that would be too assuming, he is not your subject. Neither would I have you write unto him: for a piece of paper is a dead, unanimated thing, and hath no persuasive eloquence. No, in none of these ways would I have you to reprove him: for by them all, you only run the risk of losing him for ever. But I would recommend it to you, in the words of my text, to go to him yourselves, as a physician resorts unto the chambers of the sick, after you have waited the convenient season, and have received a proper frame and spirit for the work in which you are going to be employed. It was our
Lord's

Lord's usual method, while he went about doing good to the souls and bodies of men, to go and converse with sinners in their own houses—to eat and drink with them, not to countenance them in their sins, but to have an opportunity of winning them over to himself. “Go you, and do likewise.” Such an act of condescension, on your part, will convince your brother, that your hearts are not quite estranged from him, and that no imposthume of anger and malice against him hath been formed in your breasts. This is the most likely way of succeeding with him, because the Saviour of the world hath prescribed it. “Go and tell him his fault”—not at all times. No, you need the wisdom of the Holy Ghost to inform you of the season, as well as of the manner of performing this duty. The surgeon lances not the abscess till it be ripe. The Lord God forbore to call our first parents to account for their ungrateful rebellion against him, till the cool of the day—till they found that they were naked, and saw the miserable condition to which sin had reduced them; then he appeared among the trees of the garden to reason with them, and to reprove them for their sin. And an acceptable time it was, as the event verified. As “there is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence;” so there is a time to reprove, and a time to forbear from reproving. There “is a time in which the transgressions of the wicked may be manifold, and their

their sins mighty—a time in which they may afflict the just, take a bribe, and turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. In that time the prudent will keep silence; for it is an evil time.” Amos v. 12, 13. It was never deemed an instance of discretion to draw a sword against a mad man: no, not even when he hath a drawn sword in his own hand. Abigail, as you have heard, was mute while Nabal was drunk. You would not venture to go to sea in a storm, or a hurricane. Why then should you tell your brother his faults, while his passions are in a ferment? This is only to re-kindle the dying embers, and to precipitate him, as much as you can, into the pit of destruction. The spies, who were sent to view the Land of Promise, raised such a tumult in the camp, when they came back; that the people were, in that moment, for returning into Egypt; and cursed Moses and Aaron with open mouths: but what did the two brothers do, during this seditious insurrection? why, they “fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of Israel,” and while they were thus prostrate on the ground, all the arrows of the insurgents flew over their heads. When their rage had been expended, they then argued with them. There are seasons therefore—peculiar seasons, in which a brother is to be reproved, if you would reprove him to any valuable purpose. These you should watch for, and these you should gladly embrace

embrace when they present themselves unto you. "Be not like the unwise, in whose mouth is always an unseasonable tale." Force not your admonitions upon any against their will; because there are some tempers so irresistible, that like the disease called *noli me tangere*, if you were to tamper with them, you would quickly inflame them to a pitch of incurableness." Tell your brother his fault between him and you alone." If his trespass was secret, make it not public. Try to heal his soul without wounding his fame: for a "good name is better than precious ointment." Eccles. vii. i. Bury your brother's sin in your own bosom. As no intreaties can prevail with the grave to give up its dead, so neither bending knees, nor overflowing tears should extort from you the secrets of a brother. Be not like the viper's brood, which eat their way out of their mother's bowels, that they may *bring themselves to light*. Some tongues are so slippery and flippant, that they sometimes reveal what they would wish to conceal. And the fool is ready to burst till he hath disclosed all, that he knows of every matter. A secret to him is like a thorn in the flesh, which must be extracted before he can be at ease. The son of Sirach compares him to a woman in travail, who hath no respite from her pains, till she is delivered of her child. Persons of this sieve-like make, should not pretend to be reprovers; for when they have published their brother's faults on the house-top, with what face can they offer him

him any brotherly admonitions? When Joseph would make himself known to his brethren, and would first remind them of their past unkindness to him, he would suffer none to be present but himself and his brethren. "Cause every man," cried he, "to go out from me." Gen. xlv. 1. When was it that the Lord rebuked Cain? It was when he was alone. Gen. iv. 9. 10. When he was angry with Aaron and Miriam, and reproved the one sharply, and laid on the other the plague of leprosy in its most ghastly form, he first called them both into the tabernacle, and withdrew them from the sight and hearing of the people. Public sins should be publickly reproved. Such as threaten evil to the state, and are big with mischief to the church, should be laid as open as possible. Treasons and heresies should be divulged as soon as they are known, lest they should, by misprision, gain a head, and spread like wild-fire, which cannot be easily extinguished. But private faults should have a private reprehension, lest you should harden your brother; and your reproofs should have no other effect upon him, but to make him more daring to offend—lest by unloosening the restraints of shame, you should make him more the child of hell than ever. "Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone." And as you go, be sure that your motive and design in reproofing him be just and equitable. Let not the wild fire of pride, and vain glo-

ry be intermingled with your zeal. Your heat should be a sacred heat, and not the effervescence of animal spirits. The fire of the sanctuary must not carry with it the smoke of bye-ends, or sinister views. The glory of God must be your chief aim, and next to that, must be your hatred of sin, and a regard to the health and salvation of your brother's soul. Stimulated by these motives, go to him right willing and anxious to strike the nail home into his conscience. Use not many circumlocutions; but tell him plainly—"thou art the man. By the trespass, for which I am come to reprove thee, thou hast crucified my Lord." Daub not with untempered mortar, but apply a caustic which may reach the quick. Unfold his crime before him in its nature and circumstances—in its aggravations and consequences; and then with earnestness, blended with unfeigned compassion; ask him—"is not this sin, of which you have been confessedly guilty, a great dishonour to *our* God, a sad slur on your good name, and a disgrace to your profession? doth it not impair your bodily health, as well as waste your substance? doth it not wound your conscience, as well as endanger the loss of your precious and immortal soul? For the Lord's sake therefore, repent of this your wickedness, and pray God that you may be delivered from the snare of the devil." If you were to reprove him in softer terms, or with milder accents; and only say
to

to him as Eli said unto his sons—"Why do you do so?" You would but disturb, instead of allaying his disorder. A weak medicine may be able to rouse the noxious humours in the human body from their latent covert, and circulate them through the whole frame; but it can never expel them. Spare not therefore your brother, when you reprove him for sin. A little medicinal anguish is far more bearable than the worm which never dies. Be likewise impartial in your reproofs. If good men should happen to do amiss you must be as forward to reprove them as others. If Peter departs from the simplicity of the gospel, and temporizes with the Jews; Paul will "withstand him to the face." Nathan shewed no favour to David, when he was to be blamed. Elijah roundly told Ahab—"In the place, where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." Nehemiah scrupled not to charge Sanballat with falsehoods, and without ambiguity, to say unto him—"thou hast feigned them out of thine own heart." But such intrepid reprovers are not every where to be found. And great men are often great losers upon this account. They have not one person about them, who will be so kind as to tell them their fault, when they do amiss. May God have pity upon them! for they have no earthly friend, who will shew them any, or declare the truth unto them.

Carneades saith, ' that the children of the great and opulent are seldom expert in any exercise, except riding: for if they run a race with their poor play-mate, he will halt or limp, to let them reach the goal first: or, if they wrestle with him, he will fall down on purpose, that they may have the name of superior strength, and skill: thus he constantly flatters them in all that they do. But a horse, who hath no more respect to the son of a Prince, than to the son of a beggar, will fling them off, and trample them under his feet, if they have not well learned the art of horsemanship.' Use therefore no partiality in your reproofs, but let them fall alike upon all who have deserved them. Nevertheless, it is still necessary that you should consult the different tempers of different persons, and adapt your admonitions to them variously, according to their various turn of mind. You ought to reprove all offenders without exception, unless you except those who resemble *dogs* in their ferocity, or *swine* in their perverseness, " and confirmed heretics." Titus iii. 10. Yet all must not be treated in the same manner. Some will be led, and not driven: others will be driven, and not led. With some you can do more by fair, than by rough usage; while others must be scourged with a rod, if not with a scorpion. You would not hammer a glass cup like a brass cauldron. Jude must have had an eye to this; when he said—" of some have compassion, making

making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Jude 22 23. In a word, knowing with the thresher in Isaiah xxviii. 27, 28. that "the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is the cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but that the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod—that bread corn is bruised, and that the thresher will not be ever threshing it;" all your reproofs should be suited to the occasion and to that variety of dispositions with which you have to deal. There should be so much fire in them as will singe the hair, and yet not so much as will scald the flesh. Elisha did more with a kiss, than his servant could do with a staff. Beloved! if a kiss will do the business effectually carry no teeth, I beseech you, in your tongues.

5. It is necessary that he, who would reprove with success, should be as unblemished as possible, in his own conduct. He must not only be free from the faults, which he condemns in his brother, but his whole behaviour should be void of offence both towards God and towards men. He, who hath an evil and impure conscience at home, should not take the besom to sweep other people's houses. Persons of this stamp are like their father the devil, who, though he is wicked himself, is yet fond of accusing the brethren. But the christian reprovcr should be the very reverse of this character. He should imitate the example of his blessed Master, of whom it is said—"that his lips are like lillies, dropping

ping sweet-smelling myrrh." Cant. v. 13. Myrrh is in itself a bitter drug, but it is a powerful preservative from putrefaction. In allusion to this, the church speaking of her Lord's admonitions, saith in effect—"though thy lips drop myrrh, and thy words are sometimes bitter unto me; yet I feel their good effects afterwards, and plainly see, that by them thou preservest my life, and securest me from death eternal." It cannot be denied but that many, who are guilty of notorious sins themselves, do take upon them the office of reproving others: but they may as well save their breath. None will listen to them. When vice corrects sin, sin will but smile at the conceit, or wonder at its effrontery. The leper will sooner convey fresh infection, than restore health to those who are afflicted with the same disease. The *snuffers* of the sanctuary were of pure gold: so ought he to be holy, and unblameable in heart and life, who would nip vice in the bud, or bring to light the hidden works of darkness. Busy reformers, without self-reformation, will be but corrupters. That reproof hath no sting, which comes out of a bad man's mouth, "Let the righteous reprove me," was David's maxim. A good man carries much authority with him, wherever he goes, and strikes a terror into the hearts of the guilty. "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man." Mark vi. 20. The devil was afraid to face Jesus and Paul: but

he boldly fell upon the sons of Sceva, and overcame them. If you would therefore have your reproofs attended to, and are truly desirous that they may prove beneficial to the best interests of your offending brother, let your own example give due and proper weight unto them. Let him see that you avoid yourselves, what you condemn in him; and are possessed of those graces in your own souls, which you would recommend to him. Let the charms of holiness, as they shine in your whole deportment, not only attract his notice, but captivate his esteem—not only allure him to respect your counsels, but convince him that there is a reality in the religion of Jesus Christ. Thus qualified, you would be meet to reprove, and if God will give him grace to hear you, to gain your brother: which leads me to shew in the

Last place, for what end we are to reprove him. Not to please ourselves or to gratify our private resentments—not to triumph over his infirmities, or to display our superiority to him—not to insult him, or to make ourselves merry with his faults; but that we may win him over from the camp of the aliens, and restore him to his rightful owner. It is that we may bring back one lost sheep into the fold of Christ, and reinstate him in the privileges of his chosen. It is to put him afresh under his kind shepherd's care, who will watch over him with the utmost tenderness, who will feed him in green pastures, and bring him besides the

the waters of comfort—who will not suffer him to want any thing that is essentially necessary for him while he lives upon earth! will go down with him into the dark valley of the shadow of death, and will safely conduct him through the swellings of Jordan into the heavenly shore. Oh! what encouragement is this to attempt the recovery of a lost brother, and to persevere in affectionately reproofing him, whatever repulses we may meet with, or whatever obstacles may be thrown in our way? We know indeed that all our labour will be in vain, unless our heavenly and infallible guide will stand on our right hand, every moment, to direct us in all our steps. Many rules may be prescribed unto us, according to which we are to endeavour to fetch back our trespassing brethren from the wretched haunts of sin and misery, into the peaceful abodes of holiness and happiness: yet none but He, the blessed Comforter, and Enlightener of his church, can say effectually—“this is the way, walk in it.” To his guidance therefore I commend you, and to the light of his teaching. May he give you words, and wisdom suitable to the exigencies of the case, which you are going to reprove! and then, who knows but that you shall gain your brother, and be the honoured instruments of his restoration to the life and favour of God? who can tell but that Jesus will say unto him—“this day is salvation come to this house, or renewed to this soul in its full force

force and evidence?" But whether he will hear, or whether he will forbear; surely the bare probability of this joyful event is enough to fire your zeal, and quicken your diligence in the practice of the duty, recommended in my text. Wherefore, my beloved in the Lord, who hate sin, and desire the good of Zion, let me earnestly entreat you to "go, and tell your brother his fault between you and him alone." whenever he shall trespass against you. God may bless your humble endeavours, and make you the means of gaining a lost brother; or, though you should not be so happy as to succeed with him, yet you will have the comfort to reflect, that you attempted to do him good; and may be assured, that since God hath given you a heart to seek his glory in all that you do, and in all that you attempt, "your labour shall not be in vain;" but that "your end," whatever becomes of others, "will be eternal life." Amen and Amen.

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"will be accomplished." Amen.

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